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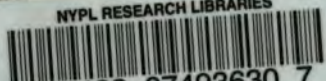
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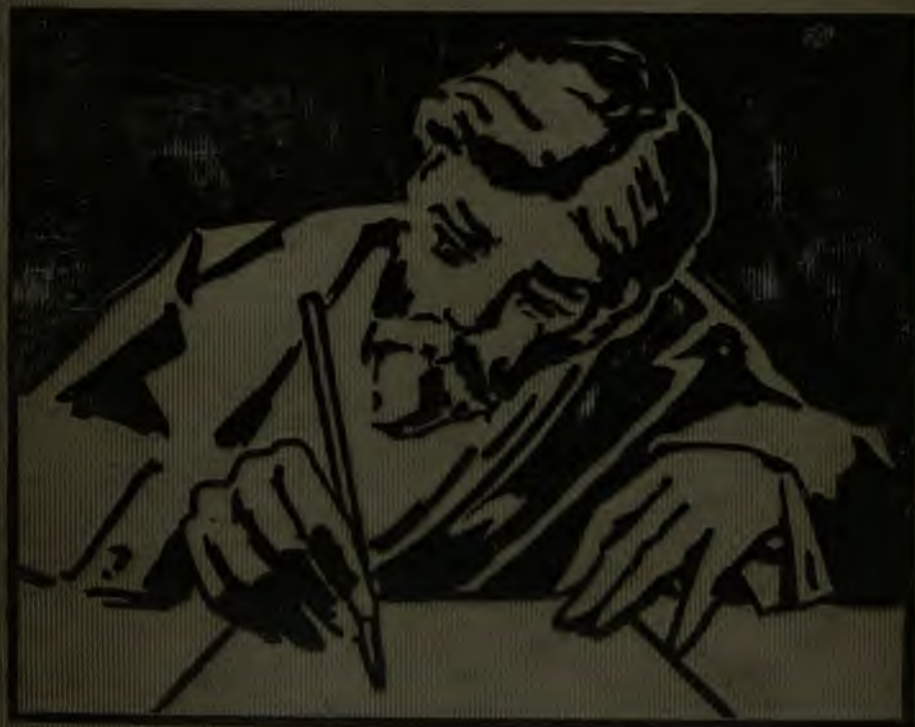
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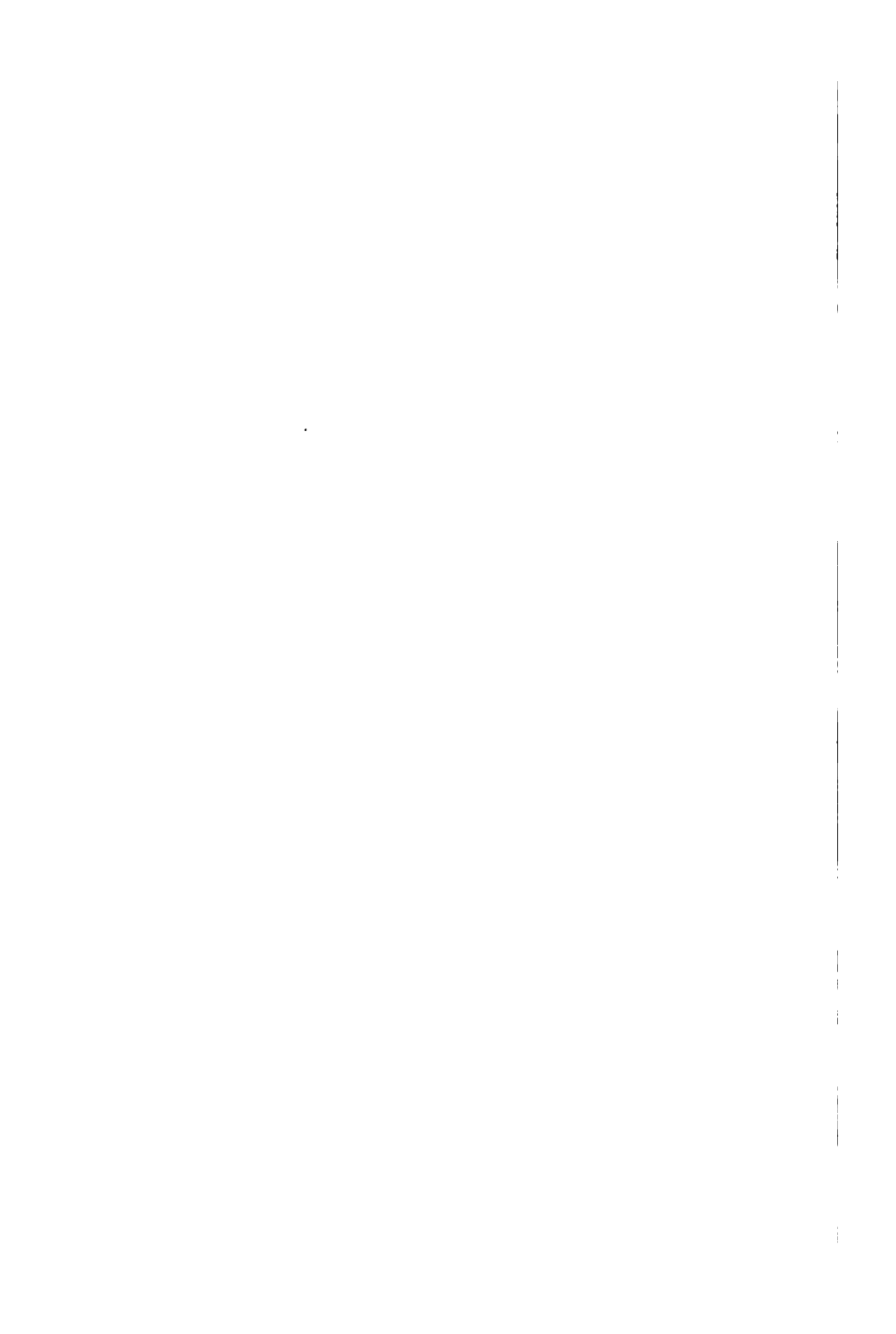
BY

CUTHBERT BARMBY

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Figure 1. (continued)

Figure 1

JAMES COPE

THE CONFESSIONS OF A UNITED STATES
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

By CUTHBERT BARMBY

ILLUSTRATED BY POWELL CHASE

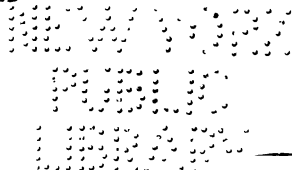
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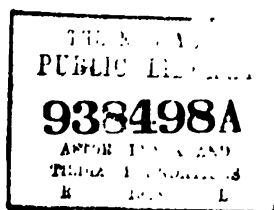
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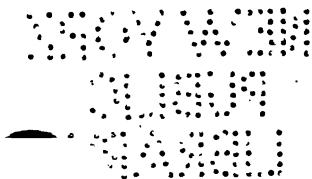
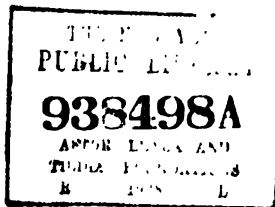




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Republican one had offered better chances, I should undoubtedly have sailed in on it. Principles did not trouble me, but I was a very popular man all the same; called every man who had his vote by his Christian name at election times; stood innumerable drinks, and was known as Good Old Jimmy to every saloon-keeper in Lodo.

I think it was at the age of fifteen that I finally determined to be President of the United States, and with that end in view became office-boy to Lodo's leading firm of attorneys. This was not my first employment, mind you; for I had previously put in one year on the cars running between Lodo and San Francisco, and another as a telegraph clerk.

All legal gentlemen, who are not judges, are attorneys-at-law in California—that is, barristers who do their own soliciting; and in due time I became one also; not speedily and with ease, but after an almost incredible amount of hard work, and many sleepless nights. It was eight years before I attained this grade, and during the whole of them I was working like a black, not for the Attorneyship only, but for the Presidency as well. There is little doubt of the fact that, at the age of twenty-four, I knew more about International law than any man in the State of California.

At twenty-five, as before observed, I became District-attorney of Lodo. My special duties as such lay in

prosecuting every man, woman, and child that fell into the Sheriff's hands ; sometimes unaided ; sometimes assisted by special counsel ; always with a zeal exactly proportioned to the funds which the prisoner might have at his command. I had been doing this for exactly one year at the time of which I am now going to write, and was already a finished expert in all the little technicalities, such as packing juries, bribing jurors, and so forth, which prove so financially beneficial to those holding positions such as mine was.

One Friday morning a murder case was occupying my attention as I sat in my office. The Sheriff of Lodoso County sat by my side. The prisoner was an acquaintance of mine, but this signified little, for I was acquainted with nearly every man in Lodoso County, though it was about as big as Ireland. He was known to me as Charles Young, and the killing, which I was now investigating, had happened up in the Lodozal mines, which lay some fifty miles away among the mountains, from whence the Sheriff had brought him only the day before to lodge in Lodo jail.

Now I remembered Young's coming to Lodo for the first time quite well, though at that time I was a telegraph boy, aged only eleven years. Young had come with considerable dash and style to Lodo ; had brought with him a very stylish woman, and had chartered the best suite of rooms in Lodo's best hotel. Therein he had stayed one month, during which he had

female inhabitants of Lodo talked so unkindly of her. Zoe, with her paint and her prettiness, was not received in Lodo society, but the mystery of the source of her income was a favourite topic in Lodo's best parlours when the women-folk got together. Two things, however, are certain ; one that I knew all about it, and the other that Tommy, her son, did so as well, for he left her at an early age, and took to selling the *Lodo Chronicle* and sleeping in holes and corners. I shall have much to say about Tommy hereafter, and may say at once that if ever I hated a boy in my life he was that boy. It was curious, but a sort of natural antipathy seemed to spring up between us from the very first moment of our seeing each other. I don't know how Tommy felt, but I felt that Tommy's eyes made me uncomfortable when he was only nine years old. He was now nearly fourteen.

Thus much I knew of Charles Young on that Friday morning, and I told it to the Sheriff as he sat by my side.

"He ain't no murderer," remarked the Sheriff when I had done. I felt inclined to agree with him, but said nothing.

Several things lay on the table in front of us, and they were all ticketed Exhibits A. B. C. D. and so on. I began to examine them one by one in alphabetical order, and the Sheriff helped me and pointed out various particulars about the articles.

Exhibit A. was a pistol, an ugly-looking long-barrelled Colt. I knew something about pistols and their use, and thus I handled it knowingly, but with caution. Four of its chambers contained loaded cartridges, and the remaining one contained an empty exploded case.

Exhibit B. was a dirty flannel shirt with a few dark stains on it which, when analysed, would prove to be, and did subsequently prove to be, human bloodstains. It was not marked, but I could prove that Charles Young was wearing it at the moment of his arrest.

Exhibits C. and D. were a pair of bloodstained overalls and some high boots.

Exhibit E. was a pocket-book.

I took up exhibit E. and opened it, and found in it a roughly drawn plan, apparently of some undeveloped mine; a few small nuggets of gold; a photograph of an elderly woman, not unlike Charles Young, and a cancelled cheque. Having looked at the cheque, I looked at the Sheriff. Seeing him fully occupied examining the nuggets, I slipped the cheque into my pocket. This was irregular, but I often did irregular things.

When we had examined all the exhibits, I asked the Sheriff what view he took of the matter, and he said—

“It was a fair enough fight, I reckon. That Young ain’t the kind to shoot from behind. He says it was square enough, and that the other shot first and took

I went to her chair, took her hand into my own, and looked into her eyes. I was moved, and I believe my face showed it, which was remarkable.

"You are right, Vine," I said. "I have been a humbug. But I will tell you the truth now. I made a mistake. I thought I loved her, but now, now——"

I think my face frightened her, for she snatched her hand from my grasp, and tilted back the rocking chair so that I could not see her face. She remained thus, and laughed; but her laughter was not merry, or natural, though she feigned that it was so, and that it precluded all other bodily effort. I could see her little brown shoes tilted upward, and her pretty hat and her wavy black hair, and I stood moodily looking at these things, while her laughter jarred on my heart.

When it was over, she spoke, still hiding her face.

"If you say another word, or look like that again, I shall scream. How dare you? Go back to your chair at the other side of the desk, and don't be silly."

I went. I had been foolish to allow my feelings to get the better of me then. Neither place nor time was propitious.

"I am sorry, Vine," I said.

When she saw me safely seated, she rose from her chair, and coming to the other side of my desk, began to examine the exhibits which lay on it, every now and then looking into my face. She was plainly frightened,

and my face did not seem to reassure her. I had lost control of myself for the first time in my life.

She tried to bluff her fear away by tantalising me.

"He's a handsome fellow, that Englishman," she remarked.

"What Englishman?"

"I suppose those are bloodstains. Ugh!" she said, ignoring my question. "There ought to be some nuggets somewhere. He said I could have them if I could get them. Ah! here they are. You see, Jimmy, I have got them."

She put the nuggets into her purse. This was irregular.

"Who are you talking about?" I asked again.

"Yes. I went down to the jail bright and early this morning, and saw him," she continued, ignoring my remark again. "He would make two men such as you, Jimmy, with those shoulders of his. He never murdered anybody. He couldn't with those eyes, and you know it, Jimmy. There is no humbug about him, though he may once have been wild."

"Who?" I asked once more.

"Charles Young, the Englishman," she answered in a voice that trembled, though meant to be defiant. "Didn't you know? I am going to defend him, and try to be his friend. It will be my first murder case. How mad you look. Thought I would just call and get these nuggets, and——"

Something in my face caused Vine to cease speaking and run to the door. I don't know what it was, and did not mean it consciously ; but she ran, saying—

“Jimmy! If you touch me, I will scream.” Her face was terrified.

I sat down when she had gone. My head was throbbing, and I buried it in my hands. My whole nature seemed to have risen up in one great desire to possess that girl, and it was some time before I could compose myself sufficiently to summon my clerk. When he came, I notified him of my purpose and left the office.

The sun was shining brightly when I got outside and started for my bachelor rooms through the dusty streets. I met several of my male friends on my way, and one and all greeted me with the same remark—

“Hulloa, Jimmy, come and have a drink.”

But, for a wonder, I did not go and have any drinks, though I tried to smile at them and appear genial as was my wont. They looked at me strangely, nevertheless.

When I reached my rooms I locked myself into them, pulled down the blinds, and stopped up the key-hole with blotting paper. I am a cautious man in small matters, and it came quite naturally to me to do this.

I now took the cheque from my pocket again and examined it very thoroughly.

It was an ordinary English cheque for £100, drawn on the Wearham Branch of the Capital and Provincial Bank by one Randal Mulready, in favour of one Charles Sydney Mulready, and made payable to bearer.

Its date showed that it was fifteen years old, and it was evident, from its single cancellation mark, that it had been presented and cashed at the branch bank on which it had been drawn.

I pored over this cheque long, and it interested me much. It was a clue which I had been seeking for some time.

I was certain of the facts, but I nevertheless unlocked a drawer in my desk and took out of it the newspaper. The paper was a New Orleans paper which had come to me by the merest chance, and which I had kept because of an advertisement. It ran thus :—

FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD !

Will be paid to any one who will notify the undersigned of the present whereabouts of, or prove the death of, one Charles Sydney Mulready, known to have arrived in New Orleans on July 20th, 18—. Should this advertisement attract his own notice, be it known to him that the past is forgiven, and it will be highly to his advantage to communicate with the undersigned immediately.

CODLING & WINTER,
Solicitors, Wearham, England.

I put the paper away again ; indeed its extraction from the drawer had been superfluous, for I knew the advertisement by heart. I regretted that I could not lock up every number of that particular issue in the same way. But, as it proved, there was little danger.

On looking out Wearham in an atlas, I found it to be in Northumberland, and marked it with a pencil. Then I went out. My destination this time was the telegraph office, where, after some thought, I wrote the following cable :—

“Send full particulars Mulready, by return mail, to James Cope, District-Attorney, Lodo, California. Matter of life and death.”

I did not go away when I had handed this in, but waited to see and hear the telegraph clerk send it, and read it on the instrument as he did so. This was easy, as I had myself been a telegraph clerk. Not only did I do this, but I also stopped his manipulations when any one entered the office, and pocketed the original message when it was sent ; nor did I leave a copy. This was irregular, but I often did irregular things ; and the clerk said nothing, because he received ten dollars over and above the cost of the message.

This done, I went to my rooms and began to collect authorities for a document I purposed writing.

CHAPTER II

L ODO was not a large city, but it had boomed ; that is, it had tried to make the natural growth of twenty years in one year, and was bonded and mortgaged up to the hilt, from its harbour works to its sewers, and from its sewers to its public buildings. What is more, its own citizens had, in their ardour, foolishly taken up most of its bonds. Among its notable buildings was the largest prison in the State of California ; and among its latest acquisitions was an electric plant capable of generating twice as much electricity as its lighting and car system were ever likely to demand. Now the *Lodo Chronicle* made the announcement that the city was about to acquire something else in the shape of a chair of electrocution, with which the State was about to endow its prison. The *Chronicle* made this announcement in its largest type, through sheer pride in the honour which was about to be thus conferred on the city, and the population of Lodo read it, no doubt, with excited gratification.

"DEAR SIR,—We address you on the supposition that the following cablegram was sent by you—

"‘Send full particulars Mulready by return mail to James Cope, District-Attorney, Lodo, Lodoso County, California. Matter of life and death.’

The above message was signed ‘Cope,’ but, as you will note, we address you officially lest James Cope should prove to be an adventurer trying to extract information by using your official title. If this be so, we know we can rely on an official of the United States Government to notify us of the fact, and return our communication, holding its contents sacred. If, however, it be not so, we deem that a full reply, though perhaps irregular, is imperative, feeling as we do that a gentleman holding a high position such as is yours would not use the phrase ‘matter of life and death’ unless there were some urgent necessity for doing so.

"We presume that your cable was the fruit of our advertisement in a New Orleans paper, and will repeat that Charles Mulready notified his uncle, Randal Mulready, of his safe arrival in that city on July 20th, more than fifteen years ago.

"Further, we will be absolutely open with you, and state that he did this in conformity with a promise which his uncle had extracted from him before leaving England; his reason for leaving England at that time, and subsequently, as we suppose, changing his name, being that he had forged his uncle’s name to a

cheque for one hundred pounds. But that is all forgotten and forgiven now.

"Some eighteen months ago the steamer, *Prince Charlie*, went down in the Irish Channel with all on board, and among them were Randal Mulready, his son, and his son's two sons. Through the foundering of that steamer, Charles Sydney Mulready becomes the lawful owner of Melton Castle and one of the largest estates in England.

"We may mention, however, that a report of his death reached his uncle, and, through him, ourselves, some years ago ; and we would therefore, while urging you to use every effort in your search, ask you to be circumspect, and to be quite sure of your ground before contradicting this report and thereby starting to life unnecessary anxiety in the minds of those who believe themselves rightfully entitled to, and are now in restricted possession of the estate. Charles Mulready was the son of the elder of Randal Mulready's two younger brothers. The present limited possessor of the estate is Vivian Mulready, the son of the younger brother, who is a minor, a Romanist, and in the hands of a Romanist priest. His father went to Mexico early in his life, and died there comparatively recently. The son, Vivian, was brought over by his guardian to claim the property, and his credentials seem satisfactory unless Charles Mulready or his heirs live. We advertise in that hope, it being desirable, for many

I did another odd thing now which I had never done before. Entering my sleeping-room, I placed a hand on either corner of my dressing-table and looked at my laughing reflection in the looking-glass. I stood doing this for fully five minutes, and it delighted me, and I saw an expression of conscious power and confidence in myself grow upon my face as I did it. Had any one then chanced to see me standing laughing and gazing into my own eyes they would have seen for once the real Jimmy and not the sham one, and the sight might have impressed and frightened them. It did not frighten me, but it impressed me ; for there was something extraordinarily and deliberately wicked about my eyes for those five minutes. I gloated in it.

Five minutes afterwards I had gained the street and was hurrying towards the court-house with my usual expression of bright geniality. On my way I met a large waggon, drawn by four horses, and surrounded by an interesting crowd, and smiled pleasantly when informed that it was the electrocution chair and its apparatus on its way to the prison.

Arrived at my office, I spent the day in putting the finishing touches to the document of which I have already spoken. This document had occupied me many days and nights ; had entailed an infinite amount of research and patience, and the consultation of many legal authorities, some of the books coming from San Francisco and other places. I was

satisfied with it when I took it home with me at night, and put the last touch to it in my own room. This was the engrossing of the words "Power of Attorney" in bold letters on a separate slip of parchment, which I then attached to the head of the document with the white of an egg, so that the joint was invisible. This done, I wrote a few letters, thought for a while, and then went to bed, to sleep tranquilly for the first time for three weeks.

CHAPTER III

ON the following morning I happened to stroll down to the precincts of the jail.

Lodo jail is quite separate from Lodo prison, and is situated in the basement of Lodo court-house. It is an exceedingly dirty and uncomfortable place.

My office being in the same building, it was only natural that I should know the jail and its custodians well. I did know them very well.

Arrived at the jail door, I opened it with a private key of my own and quickly locked it again from the inside. The authorities would not, perhaps, have approved of my possessing that key ; but it is a mistake to truckle to the scruples of authorities. I do not say, mind you, that I stole it. I merely surreptitiously acquired possession of it.

Having locked the jail door, I chanced upon the custodian in charge, and presented to him a twenty-dollar bill. This was undeniably irregular ; but the custodian pocketed the bill and did not speak. He hardly could do so, for he was listening outside Charles Young's cell with all his ears when I chanced

upon him, and speech on his part would have interrupted the conversation to which he was listening. However, in consideration of the bill, he allowed me to listen too. It was a satisfactory transaction for us both.

Inside the cell the British cut-throat, as the *Lodo Chronicle* loved to style him, and his counsel were holding commune together.

"At any rate, Miss Duncan," said the cut-throat—and I noted that his voice trembled, and sounded strangely soft—"whether you succeed or no, you have been awfully good to me." (I gently shoved the jailer away from the keyhole in the door at this point, and applied my own eye to it. He was holding her hand.) "Believe me, thanks to you, I have enjoyed my stay here more than anything that has happened to me for years and years. I am a bad egg, I know that ; but I—please don't look at me like that, or I shall say something idiotic—I am very grateful to you, and feel sometimes that—never mind what I feel, but, whatever it is, you make me feel it. Do you know, since I have known you, I have somehow come to object very strongly to the idea of being electrocuted on that abominable chair for the amusement of the people of Lodo. A month ago I should have been rather glad of it than otherwise. But now—well. They seem bent on it, don't they ? I have done many foolish and wicked things in my life, but I have always fought fair,

and I am—I am glad you believe me, Miss Duncan.” (Charles Young certainly looked fine as he spoke, and his words conveyed far more than they expressed.) “Goodbye. What! Are you——?” (Yes. She was crying, and lowered her eyes.) “Goodbye. It is very nice of you to take my hand.”

I was compelled at this point to remove my eye from the peep-hole and bolt into an empty cell some way further up the passage. I made no noise in doing it, having thought it prudent to remove my boots while I listened and watched.

When Dave the jailer came to me, after having let out Miss Vine Duncan, he seemed to find my face unpleasant, not to say alarming; but he had not much time to think about it. Scarcely had he entered the cell and begun to gape, before I had slammed the door to and was addressing him from the outside through the peep-hole. This feat was safe and easy of accomplishment, for the cell doors opened outwards and fastened automatically by a spring catch which could only be manipulated from the outside.

“See here, Dave, old man,” I said. “I am going to talk to Young, and I don’t want you fooling around outside the door while I’m doing it. See? That’s why I’ve locked you in there. Now don’t get mad; and if you begin shouting I’ll go upstairs and say I came down here and found the jail door open and you asleep in there, and locked you in. Catch on?”

District-Attorney *versus* Deputy-Constable. Who comes out on top? The constable? Not much. I'm not going to let him out, you may bet your life on that. I'm going to fix him. Take hold of this, will you?"

The thing I handed through the peep-hole was another twenty-dollar bill.

"I don't want to have you arrested, Dave, but——"

I got no further. Dave took the bill, and I hurried away down the passage.

I was now about to run my first great risk, a double one; for when I had once opened the door of Young's cell I knew I could not shut it again; also that the man I was about to face was equally cool and three times as powerful as myself. So my heart beat loudly as I opened that door and peered round the door frame. I was smiling, but I think that smile was the hardest task I had yet performed. Young rose from the bench on which he was sitting and faced me when he heard the door open, and I opened the conversation in a genial whisper.

"One moment, please, before you speak," I said, "and, when you do so, kindly let it be in a whisper. I have come here at the risk of my reputation to help you. If you interrupt me I will slam this door and go away again. I propose to save your life, not that I care a tinker's damn for you, mind you, but because of your son, and something else of which I will tell

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you by and by. Perhaps you are aware that in the present state of the popular feeling in Lodo you will infallibly be electrocuted in the new chair, notwithstanding the laudable efforts of your fair counsel, unless I intervene. If not, you may implicitly rely on my statement of the fact now. One other thing before we do business together. You see this door. It is now ajar, and must remain so while we talk for the sake of my personal safety. If you hold up your hand I shall take it to mean that you pledge your honour not to try and escape by it. Personally I am not afraid of you."

Young looked into my face. I smiled serenely and returned his gaze. He held up his big hand, and I, when I saw the motion, left the door swinging wide, and, walking forward, grasped that big hand heartily in my small one. This act of trust won him more than a thousand words could have done, and I knew it would do so. We sat down on the wooden bench. I pulled out my watch and placed it on the bench between us.

"We have exactly ten minutes," I said, "so there is no time for unnecessary words. Don't interrupt me unless you are bound to. I shall see by your face whether you take in what I say. Your name is not Charles Young, but Charles Sydney Mulready. How do I know? By this cheque for one hundred pounds to which you forged your uncle's name more than

fifteen years ago. If you excite yourself in that way we shan't get through. When the cheque came into my hands I cabled to your uncle at Wearham telling him of your present fix. He has offered me five hundred pounds to get you out of it. See? Don't like idea of a murderer in the family. He says his nephew Charles Sydney was web-footed. Let me see."

Mulready hesitated. He was much moved.

"If you don't feel like trusting me as I'm trusting you, I'll quit," I remarked.

Mulready silently pulled off his boot and sock. He was web-footed.

"That is good enough," I continued. "You arrived in New Orleans fifteen years ago, on July 20, 18—, and there you fell in with Zoe Davenport, actress. You married her under your right name, but changed it to Young afterwards because of the cheque. You made a fine show with the little money you had, and travelled, and finally landed in Lodo, broke. I remember that. Subsequently you and your wife did not agree, and you left her on the night your son was born. You went prospecting, and meant never to return. But you have returned. She—well never mind how she made out—but you never throve, though you steadied up and quit drinking. And then you got to fighting and shooting. Don't excite yourself. I believe it was a fair fight on your side, but it dropped you into your present fix, and I'm going to

CHAPTER IV

I DID no more official business that day, but went instead for a stroll on the sea cliff, a mile or so outside the town. A few isolated cottages were dotted along the summit of this cliff, and, after a somewhat long round, I passed by one of them and carelessly looked into its bay-window. Two girls were sitting within it. This was annoying, and I passed on, cutting off the head of an inoffensive sunflower with much spite when out of range of the window. I now made another long detour which brought me to the very edge of the cliff exactly opposite to, and two hundred yards away from, the window I had looked into. Here I lay down among the brush and watched the cottage for two mortal hours. My heart beat fast, and I felt during the whole time as one feels when about to plunge into the sea from a bathing-machine. But at last one of the girls left the cottage and started down the hill for Lodo. I watched her until she was out of sight, and my heart now beat faster still. I had never

been so nervous in my life. When she had disappeared I went to the window again and looked in. I did not walk this time, I crawled. One girl sat alone now, writing, and I watched her for a while. She was Vine Duncan.

She was very hard at work writing ; but by and by she dropped her pen and looked round the room, then at the window, then at the door. I ducked my head promptly as she looked at the window.

Having thus, as she supposed, ascertained her privacy, she stood up, manuscript in hand, and began to deliver it orally to an imaginary audience. She did it very nicely and charmingly, and it delighted me to watch her. I could hear her, too, for her voice was as clear and penetrating as a bell, and its every modulation thrilled my heart. As she warmed to her work she rarely looked at her manuscript, but delivered her words fluently and passionately from memory, as if from her very soul. The address moved me profoundly, not so much the words as the sight of the woman I loved giving full vent to herself because she believed herself alone. Not a detail escaped me, and my lips moved and my expression changed with hers. I had never seen her thus abandon herself to herself before, and her beauty and charm and power wrought upon me strangely, insomuch that I grew giddy and trembled in my legs.

It was a long address, but not so to me listening as

I crouched beneath the window-sill. When it was finished I remained crouching motionless, not that I wanted to, but because I did not feel equal to doing anything else. Vine stood for a while with her arms outstretched, and her eyes shone with a wonderful light I had never seen in them before ; and then, with a curious little cry and a gulp and a catch in her breath, she turned to the piano, sat down, and struck some chords. I was glad now that I had been unable to move.

Vine was going to sing—a simple statement ; but then, readers, you do not know how Vine sang. I have never heard such a voice as hers ; I have never heard one sing like her ; but I tell you this. Whatever there was good in me rose up and beat against my heart when I heard Vine sing ; and music, such as hers, seemed to speak to me, and appeal to something inside me that nothing but music ever touched into life.

I do not know what prompted her to choose that special drone-song. Perhaps the whispering minor chords that came and went had something to do with her choice ; perhaps her love for Charles Mulready had started some tender thoughts of future motherhood. I do not know ; but every note of it came from her heart tender and soft as the softest whisper, and I could hear the rythmical rocking of the cradle all the time. Here is the drone-song :—

DRONE-SONG.

Shet yer eyes 'n doan be skeary,
 Nid, nod, nid, nod.
 Yer jest weary, ain't yer, deary ?
 Shet yer eyes 'n trust in God.
 Mother'll tell yer 'bout the hummin',
 Buzzin', whisp'rin' keeps a'comin'
 Through the winder there.
 Hear that, childie ? Swoopin', sizzin' ?
 'Tis the night hawk's wings a'whizzin'
 Streakin' through the air ;
 'N that everlasting shrillin'
 Singin' sound's the bull-frogs billin'
 With their gels around the slough.
 Kinder sweet, tho', ain't it, too ?

 Put yer little hand in mother's,
 Rosy hand that gropin' pressed,
 Tiny finger-marks that linger
 Warmly yet on mother's breast.
 Hush 'n hear the tule rushes
 Whisp'rin' with the willer bushes
 'Bout the shinin' silver moon ;
 Tellin' how it's God's light peekin'
 Tender from the clouds 'n seekin'
 Mother's little angel coon.
 Listen to the river cryin',
 Boomin', ripplin', murm'rin', dyin'
 Neath its windin'-sheet of mist.
 Mournful, ain't it ? Whist, dear ! Whist !

 Drowsy heavy eyelids droopin',
 Shet them, darlin', shet them tight ;
 Lazy, lazy, as a daisy
 Folds its petals to the night.
 Never mind the yap, yap, yappin'
 Of coyotes wranglin', snappin',
 Only heed the owl's to-whoo ;

'N moskeeters distant dronin',
'N the bittern lonesome moanin'
Dunkadoo, dunkadoo,
'S though its heart was cryin' too.
Does she love old mother's croonin' ?
Are the night sounds driftin', swoonin'
Far away, little heart ?
Can she see old mother kneelin',
Cryin' foolish cause she's feelin'
You'n her must some day part ?
Holy God, who loves the flowers,
Love my babe through life's sad hours—
Dear, dear little gel—
O God, mother'll quit her cryin'
'N jest love yer, livin', dyin',
If you'll use her baby well.

Those were the words. But, what are words ?

Vine buried her face in her hands when she had finished her song, and I could see her shoulders moving up and down in little jerks. Fully five minutes went by before I had nerved myself sufficiently to proceed, and I then entered the house softly without either knocking or ringing.

She was seated, still flushed, and with eyes still wet, when I entered her presence, but when she saw me she started up nervously, saying—

"Belle is out. What do you mean by coming in without knocking ?"

"I know Belle is out. I watched her go. I came in without knocking because I wanted to," I said.

"I am all alone." This remark of Vine's was a little

cry of fear as well. It was stupid, and I watched her realise it and try to compose herself. I suppose it was my face that made her afraid.

"I know that, too, and counted upon it," I replied.

"What do you want?"

I did not answer at once, but turning, locked the door and put the key in my pocket. This done, I walked forward. She now stood upright, facing me bravely. I took her hands forcibly in my own, and we stood thus hand in hand for a moment, silent. I did not mean to frighten her, or to be tragic. It was the intensity of my purpose and feeling that made me so. Twice I tried to speak, and twice failed through pure agitation. When at last I spoke, my voice sounded as strange to myself as it evidently did to her.

"Vine," I said, "I have come here because I love you with all my soul. Will you be my wife? Wait—for God's sake wait before you answer. I will work for you; I will slave for you. I will love you and be true to you. I will try with my whole heart to be honest, and good, and noble, for your sake, Vine, and I will make a great name for you. I can, and will do these things if you will be my wife, Vine darling. Will you?" I knelt down, still holding her hands.

She looked at me and the sight seemed to frighten her. I felt as she looked into my eyes that the intensity of my feeling had twisted up my face and made it horrible to look upon. I saw, too, that she had never

"Goodbye, Jimmy. Won't you say goodbye, and shake hands?"

I did not heed her words, and if she held out her hand I did not see it. My one instinct was to get away somewhere, anywhere, and I managed it to the extent of the two hundred yards which lay between the cottage and the place where I had lain and watched so long. Here I lay down again among the brushwood. I have a dim recollection that she came to me here, and touched me, and stood over me for a while, and then I went to sleep. When I woke up I was in my own rooms, in bed. It was night time. A light was burning, and the woman who attended to my rooms and wants slept in a chair near by. I got up, dressed, and wrote some letters while she still slept. My head was quite clear. I then woke her and requested her to go away. I looked at her as I did this, and she went very quickly. She ran. Then I went to post my letters. Nothing was wrong with me, and my footstep was buoyant as I walked the silent streets. I felt lighter and free, that was all. I had lost the weight of everything that had hitherto dragged me in the moral direction.

CHAPTER V

LEVINSKY'S is in a by-street of Lodo, and belonged to Levinsky. Levinsky was a very intelligent man, his intelligence lying in his power of silence.

There was a little bar-room at Levinsky's; not a vulgar beer-slinging bar, but one where the best only was sold, and where drinks were artistically blended by Levinsky's own master-hand; and there were dining-rooms, and other rooms, wherein absolute privacy could be guaranteed. Levinsky's was essentially private, so much so that an introduction by one of its habitués was necessary before a neophyte could enter its doors. It was, in fact, a very convenient place indeed, and always looked eminently quiet and respectable.

It was here, in one of the private dining-rooms, that Judge Hornblick, British Vice-Consul Box, and I dined on the Sunday evening preceding the great trial of *The State v. Young*.

We had been, and still were, now that dinner was over, drinking champagne freely. The dinner had been mine. The champagne affected us all very differently.

The judge, grave, dignified, and noble-looking always, became more so when he drank champagne. Orlando Box, on the contrary, became demoralised and inclined to whoop.

I had expended much thought on, and expended much care in the selection of my guests on this occasion. Now, as I write this, I have the notes which I made of their characters then, before me, and I will write them down; for they will show how I looked upon my future partners at the outset of my great undertaking. I cannot help smiling as I read them.

"Judge Hornblick has a noble face, and is an important personage always, in the opinion of others as well as himself. Add to Hornblick a quart of champagne, and the sense of his own importance swells his head. He is always grave, dignified, and distinguished; and the people of the City of Lodo look up to him. Judge Hornblick has often been primed of late. What is more, he owes me five hundred dollars. He is a childless widower, and was once a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States. This stated, it is not to be wondered at that he is grave and dignified; but it is highly to be regretted that he has been led, in booming times, to invest so prodigally in Lodo bonds and real estate. No one regrets this more than himself. He is a tall and exceedingly powerful-looking man, lean to gauntness, and has a restless piercing eye, a chary mouth, and a goat-shaped beard that is nearly white.

His presence is commanding, and once commanded my respect and fear. I fancy it is the other way about now, for I have found him out, and he knows it. I think I am the only man in Lodo who has done so.

"Orlando Box, British Vice-Consul at Lodo, is of a very different brand. His chin falls away where the judge's protrudes, and his eyes are mild and inclined to water, while the judge's are keen and dry as a spark. His has been a chequered career since leaving his country for its good in his youth, run, for the most part, in South America, among human half-breeds, polygenous sheep, saloons, and rebellions. He has only very recently drifted into the Vice-Consulship at Lodo—a drift which he would never have accomplished had the office had any rightful emoluments, or had he shaved off the long grey beard which spreads itself luxuriantly out on his narrow chest, and makes him so patriarchal and respectable. There is no Consul at Lodo, and the Vice is only expected to honorarily see to any little British shipping that may stray into the harbour. Mighty little shipping does this, but old Box somehow manages to make a living out of what does."

Those are the notes I had written down.

Our dinner had been a good one, and our topic had been, and still was, the coming murder trial and the electrocution chair. This was inevitable. The Lodo papers wrote about, and Lodo's citizens talked about,

nothing else; neither did they ever separate the prisoner from the chair, or the chair from the prisoner.

"And now, gentlemen," said I, rising from my seat, locking the door and stopping the keyhole as was my wont, "we will come to business, please."

We drew our chairs up to the table again. I sat at its head; my friends sat on either side of me—the judge stiff and preternaturally grave and dignified, Box sprawling some, and inclined to giggle at nothing.

"No need to change our subject," I continued, "but we will now discuss it practically. We are agreed I think, gentlemen, that the prisoner is a doomed man?"

The judge simply expectorated, but did so conclusively. Box said, "You bet your life," unnecessarily loudly.

"Very good," said I. "I shall now tell you what I know about him, and then I shall make a proposal which you can decline or accept as you think best. If successfully carried out, my scheme will redound greatly to our pecuniary benefit. I make this remark because I know that you, judge, will very soon be hopelessly in the mud financially, and that you, Box, have never been anything else. No offence. I speak plainly, being sure of my facts; and your facial expression of indignation does not affect me, judge, though it will be useful hereafter, and does you credit. If we embark together we must not mince words. My communica-

tion will be a strictly private one, and if either of you plays false and divulges it, I shall make it my special business to shoot you on sight. When you have heard it you will be at liberty to treat me in the same manner. I know you both to be gentlemen of the very highest integrity. I am about to ask you to be partners in a colossal fraud. Will you hear my proposal on the terms stated, or shall we adjourn?"

I looked boldly and sneeringly into the faces of my guests.

"I will hear you," said the judge solemnly.

"It's a go," said Orlando with a whoop.

I held up my right hand and said—

"S'help me God." The others did likewise, and then I told them what I knew, and what has already been written about Charles Sydney Mulready.

The judge took it all in with dignified and judicial calm; the Consul was prone to noisy exclamations and interjections until I silenced him with my eye.

When I had finished, I took some documents from my pocket.

"I have here," said I, "a certified copy of the marriage of Charles Sydney Mulready and Zoe Davenport; here a certified copy of the registration of birth of their only son, Thomas Mulready; and here a full schedule of the Mulready property in England which, owing to the simultaneous deaths of Randal Mulready, his son, and his son's sons and wife, descends unencumbered

by trusts to his next-of-kin. I cabled for this to London, and received it yesterday. And here"—I could not help pausing as I produced the last document—"here I have the Last Will and Testament of Charles Sydney Mulready."

I held the document on high. It was the same to which I had devoted so much time and research; the same which Mulready had signed in jail; but the slip bearing the words "Power of Attorney" had been removed, and the words "Last Will and Testament" had been beautifully engrossed on the main parchment instead.

"I will now read this to you, gentlemen," I said. "You will note as I progress that various places where the names of trustees should be are as yet blank. They are awaiting your names. There must be no deception and no secrets between us. This will is a fraud. It was not signed with the knowledge that it was a will, and the signer did not know, nor will he ever know, if I and the electrocution chair can help it, that he was possessed of the enormous property with which it deals. Nevertheless, he was not a felon at the time of signature, and, to the best of my belief, the will will be a valid legal binding one the moment he has ceased to breathe. Of this, however, you, judge, must decide as I read it; in fact, I selected you as a co-partner with this end in view, knowing that you were learned in international law. Your undoubted integrity and high

standing naturally influenced me also," I added with a bow.

"You, Box, I chose because you are the representative of your Sovereign here, and the natural guardian of her subjects; and because you have seen the world and formed principles which I have observed, and which do you credit. You will not understand the legal intricacies of this document, but must rely on the judge and me as to its validity. I may, however, tell you the broad ruling of the law, which is, as between the United States and your country, that whereas movable property may be subjected to the law of the domicile, immovable property must be subjected to the *lex loci rei sitae*, or, as you do not seem to grasp the true inwardness of Latin, the law of the place where it is situated."

I then read the will. It was a lengthy one; its wording was tedious; its many clauses were elaborately protective and ingeniously definitive, and the judge and I discussed, criticised, and analysed each one of them before the following one was read. No wonder that Orlando Box slept occasionally.

It was early morning when the reading was done, and by that time the judge was amazed, and, shaking me warmly by the hand, congratulated me on a masterly legal production, his eyes shining. The British Vice-Consul woke up.

Lack of space and consideration for the reader's

patience alike forbid that my masterpiece should be given in full here, but briefly, its main provisions were :

1. That Tommy Mulready, the boy I hated, should inherit the whole bag of tricks.

2. That I, James Cope, true friend of Charles Mulready in his time of peril, should be sole executor of the will, and testamentary guardian of Thomas Mulready.

3. That George Washington Hornblick, Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, and Orlando Box, British Vice-Consul of Lodo, California, "my two true and trusted friends," should be trustees.

The three clauses here epitomised occupied several pages, and thereafter followed minute particulars of the powers conferred upon the testamentary guardian and trustees. These left little to be desired.

There were several particularly touching passages in the will which I read with some emotion, and at which Orlando Box woke up and laughed. The signature was already attested by a Notary Public, a friend of mine for whom my word was good enough. There are many Notaries who do business in this sensible and convenient manner in the Western States.

"It is a fine will, and a mighty long one," remarked Box sleepily and crossly, "but, as far as I gathered, Jimmy, it carefully provides that the judge and I get nothing but the trouble of looking after the money for the benefit of other people."

"Exactly," I said. And then I looked at the judge.

"Precisely so," said he. "We look after the money with all the integrity, honesty, and ingenuity of which we are capable. What more do you want?" The judge looked at the Vice-consul, and his left eyelid trembled into a dignified wink.

"If you were beneficiaries you could not be witnesses," said I, "and the stamp of the British Consulate, the consul's signature, and the signature of a judge of the Supreme Court of the United States of America will be desirable embellishments, if not indispensable adjunct, to Charles Mulready's last will and testament. If you begin to catch on, friend Box, do not whoop, please."

"Did you say fifty thousand a year?" asked Box.


"Nearer sixty, I find. Shut up, Box," I said.

"How about insanity?" asked the judge.

"Three doctors will testify at the trial to-morrow—or, rather, to-day—that he is unquestionably sane and responsible for his actions."

"Good. Identification?"

"We will have him embalmed, and take him along with us to England. It is bold, perhaps, and we could get along without him, I daresay: but we shall knock them eternally with those web-feet. I have already bought the body from the prison authorities, presumably for scientific investigation at the hands of a friend who does not wish his name divulged. I shall



also prove, and make him acknowledge, his right name at the trial. Time too short for risk now!"

"His wife?" asked the judge.

"We must leave her, unless you or Box will marry her. We take the boy," I answered.

"Take him where?" queried Box, dazedly.

"To England, secretly, on the night of the execution, on your sloop to San Francisco as I figure it, and then on to England. He will keep. Don't want any questions before we start. You must get leave of absence on important business, friend Box, and resign your Consulship when you reach England. I shall nobly resign my Attorneyship at the trial rather than convict my friend. Fine, eh? My deputy will step in, and is willing to pay for it. Better go round to the Consulate and fix things up, eh, judge? Sun will soon be up."

We went, by devious ways.

By the way, the judge asked me one question before we parted. It was: "There is no doubt whatever about Charles Mulready's guilt, I suppose?"

"Not the slightest," I replied.

CHAPTER VI

CHARLES YOUNG'S trial was a stirring affair, and caused more excitement in Lodo than an average Presidential election. But I was not in it, so to speak. My resignation was its first great sensation. I think I resigned nobly, and I noted that several people around me were much moved as I did so, especially Vine.

It was eight o'clock before we had fixed up everything at the British Consulate, and, as I slipped back to my rooms, I observed a crowd already waiting outside the Superior Court-house. The crowd did not observe me, though. I took particular care about that.

Arrived at my rooms, I washed, feeling that I, especially my eyes, required it; and then I attired myself with scrupulous care. In spite of it I found, on looking into my glass, that my eyes were bloodshot and my face haggard. I was glad of it. I breakfasted on a brandy-and-soda—a light breakfast, perhaps, but

stimulating, and as much as I could negotiate ; and then, lying down on my bed, I allowed myself to slide into one of my thinking fits. It was a long one, and the clock registered 10.45 when I came out of it. I was quite calm now, and my brain was clear, but I felt somewhat weak, so took another brandy. I was now ready for anything, and started for the scene of action.

The dense scum-crowd which now, unable to gain admission, stood outside the court-house, hailed me with a roar as soon as I appeared in sight. The roar was an angry one. Lodo's population had now, at all events, thanks to the *Chronicle*, the chair, and its own tattle and craving for excitement, worked itself nearly up to the lynching point. Young was a Britisher, and had killed an American subject. It is astonishing what can be made of such a fact as that in the West.

I was greeted by the scum-crowd as a sort of national champion about to give England one in the eye, rather than as an attorney about to do his duty. They patted me on the back, fawned on me, and incited me to vengeance much as they would have done a champion pugilist, and, had I allowed it, would have carried me in on their shoulders in triumph, as they did subsequently carry my deputy out. When I entered that court-house I was the most popular man in Lodo. I was Good Old Jimmy about to give the brutal Britisher a touch of Uncle Sam as no one else could give it. Shouts of praise and rude expressions of confidence

and exhortation rang in my ears. When I left the court-house—but I anticipate.

The judge was on the bench when I gained the court-room, which was packed to suffocation. The prisoner was also present, and beside his counsel, as is customary in California. I bowed to the judge; my deputy greeted me with importance; a hum went round; all eyes were turned upon me. I was the great man for whom they were all waiting, and when I appeared the preliminaries began.

The swearing in of a Jury, as we do it, is often a tedious business, and usually entails the swearing, examining, and cross-examining of some thirty or forty men before twelve jurors acceptable to both sides are secured. The qualifications supposed to be essential are that the juror shall not be an interested or biassed party, that he shall not have read of or talked of the case, and that he shall not object to capital punishment on principle; in fact, that he shall be an ignorant ass.

I suffered my deputy to examine the jurors for the prosecution, so that I might watch Vine Duncan acting on the prisoner's behalf. I enjoyed doing this, though three days before her painful anxiety and innocent credulity would have wrung me past endurance. Nothing bothered me now but a desire to smile.

I knew every juror who had been subpoenaed well—knew his life, reputation, and powers of lying. Most of them were old hands as jurors, and old friends of

mine. Vine did not know them, but as each one stepped up and was sworn she looked him in the face with her big candid eyes, and tried to read his heart.

A child might as well have tried to read the heart of a Chinaman ; indeed, they answered her questions and treated her with much the same smiling indulgence as they would have bestowed on a delicate pretty child, and Vine had the panel full in no time with two rows of smiling innocents. When she had accomplished this her face shone, and her eyes became bright with steadfast hope. My deputy looked at me, and smiled, in spite of himself. I did not wonder, but I frowned the smile away all the same. The county did not hold twelve other such seasoned sinners and liars as were Vine's jury. They could not have told the truth had they wanted to.

These gentlemen were duly sworn again as a body ; and then, my turn coming, I rose from my seat and ranged the court-room boldly with my eyes. Two things were borne in upon me as I did this—one that the prisoner was the calmest and handsomest man in the place ; the other that I had never seen Vine look more lovely and lovable. I longed and determined to make her suffer, and lower those big brown eyes that returned my glance with a touch of pity so soft that it made me hate her.

Then I spoke, and my voice had never been more ringing or my eyes more bold.

"Your Honour, and Gentlemen of the jury," I said, "at the opening of a murder trial such as is now before the Court, it is the duty of the prosecuting attorney, and would, under ordinary circumstances, be my duty now, as District-Attorney, to outline the circumstances of the crime supposed to have been committed. I decline to do this, and have chosen instead to resign my official position as District-Attorney, and leave the case in the hands of my deputy."

A buzzing ; a movement of many feet, and a craning of necks took place here.

"I have not come to this decision hastily, but it has cost me many anxious days and sleepless nights, as my appearance may testify. I resign because I cannot bring myself to do my duty ; firstly, because the prisoner, notwithstanding his nationality, his crime, and the overwhelming evidence which stands against him, has been in the past, and is still, in spite of all, my friend, and I cannot, and never will, so long as I may live, raise my voice against any man who is my friend ; secondly"—I raised my voice and looked Vine full in the eyes—"because I love the lady who defends him.

There was a great sensation here, and many audible exclamations. I stood with my hand uplifted heavenward and looking steadily at Vine until the noise was over. She, however, looked at me no longer, but her eyes, after one wild terrified glance around, hid behind

door that I had to steady one hand with the other before I could insert my latch-key. I got inside at last, and, when I had locked the door and pulled down the blinds, threw myself down on my bed and burst into the most uncontrollable delightful laughter I had ever experienced. I rolled on the bed, and hugged myself and revelled in it ; I sat up and bit my lip as Vine had done, and raised my fist and glared as Mulready had done, and then I fell back and laughed again until the tears rolled down my cheeks. Not a solemn face in the court-room, from the judge's to the pudding-faced constable Dave, but rose up before me with indescribable humour, and sent me off into ringing laughter of exquisite quality. I shall never forget that laugh, and think I was nearer then to pure unadulterated enjoyment than I had ever been.

When it was over I got up and breakfasted heartily, and then set about preparing for my sudden disappearance. I laboured with zest, and in half an hour all that I needed was packed and ready for speedy removal at night to Box's sloop, in the bowels of which I, too, was to exist for the next few days. I confess I did not relish this part of the programme, or the prospect of hiding myself among the rocks on the water front until night should come ; but it had to be, and so I stole from my rooms and started for the water front by a lonely route. The streets were deserted. I believe I could have walked down the main street

without attracting attention ; for every man, woman, and child was at the court-house, and the stores were closed, and the cars had stopped running. Lodo meant to test that chair, or know the reason why. This made me bold, and I ventured to the post office on the chance of finding another letter from England in my letter-box.

Now the post office had two entries, a front one and a back one. Needless to say I chose the latter, and as I entered it I heard voices coming from the street in front, and, what is more, I knew the voices. It did not take me long to creep round and satisfy myself that old Box was making a fool of himself.

On the sidewalk, opposite the main entrance of the post office, a news-stand stood, with a boot-blackening chair annexed to it. It belonged to Tommy Mulready and his partner Abe, and it was Tommy's voice that spoke up angrily in reply to Orlando Box's. Luckily they had the street to themselves. Box told me afterwards that he had purposely sauntered round to interview Tommy and see what stuff he was made of. There he stood, his hands in his pockets, his great beard wagging, and his watery eyes blinking with merriment. He was bating Tommy, and imagined he was being funny. Had I had the means to squash him flat on the sidewalk without exposing myself, I should have done it. Twenty times I thought he was going to spoil everything with his senile drivelling.

Tommy was already hot, and looked much as an English schoolboy looks when some one calls him a girl, or abuses Queen Victoria. Tommy's appearance was unmistakably English, and this was the grief of his life. I do not suppose there was a boy in Lodo who hated and despised everything British more than Tommy did, or whose sentiments were more fervently jingoistically American than Tommy's were. Box had evidently discovered this when I arrived.

"So a Yankee discovered a steam engine, eh, Tommy?" said Box, straddling his legs and thrusting his hands deeper into his pockets.

"Why certainly he did," replied Tommy with heat. "No British sucker ever discovered anything worth a bean anyway, except that he was a born fool."

Box smiled and wagged his head.

"I suppose," he said with a chuckle, "you consider that mealy-mouthed, psalm-singing George Washington, who never told a lie that was found out, the greatest hero that ever lived because he managed to tire out a handful of English hirelings, eh, Tommy?"

"He licked the British army off the face of the earth just as easy as rolling off a log, if that's what you mean; just as easy as I'll wipe the sidewalk with you if you say much more."

Tommy's eyes were sparkling.

"Ha! ha! Hark at the boy. You are an Englishman yourself, Tommy!"

"No I ain't."

"Yes you are. And your admirable father, who is now entertaining Lodo at the court-house, is one too."

This remark of Box's hit Tommy cruelly hard. The boy was a great favourite in Lodo, and Box was the only man who had taunted him with his father, or mentioned him, or even affected to know that Tommy and the supposed murderer were in any way connected. I saw tears spring to Tommy's eyes.

"I have no father," he said.

"No father? Haven't you though?" Box put his hand under his chin, gave it a sudden jerk upwards, grunted, and rolled his eyes. Tommy understood the pantomime, and his eyes flamed, and he strode up to his tormentor and seized him by the collar of his coat. It was all he could do to reach it.

"If I were an Englishman and happened to come across such a miserable cur and bully as you calling itself one, I'd strangle it," he cried, choking with anger.

The remark seemed to nettle the Vice-Consul, for he caught Tommy roughly by the arm, and there was a distinct tremble of anger in his voice as he said—

"You young ruffian. You will have to learn to behave yourself when you come under my control, for I will make it my business to teach you."

"Your control, you hoary old bearded skunk ? See here. That's what I think of you."

Tommy hereupon calmly and deliberately spat into the Consul's face. And then the fight began. It was not a long one, and would have gone the other way, and been shorter still—for Tommy was no match for Orlando—had not another individual appeared and hurled himself into the combat. The new comer was only a youth, but he was some six feet three inches in length, in fact he was mostly length, and his onslaught was like that of an attenuated and infuriated windmill enveloped in a cloud of dust. I caught a momentary vision of long whirling arms, and of a diminutive head swayed hither and thither by a length of neck, and then I saw old Box rise from the dust and hobble away, shaking his fist as he went. The lengthy youth was Abe, Tommy's partner ; and my longing to shake Abe by the hand was almost more than I could resist. I reckoned he had saved the scheme. It was thus that Tommy and Orlando Box became acquainted.

I got to the sloop safely that night, together with my baggage ; and the judge, Box, and I held a meeting on board which lasted the greater part of the night.

The judge brought an evening paper with him, and read out its head-lines with becoming dignity. Here are some of them :

THE GREAT MURDER TRIAL.
BRITISH BLOODHOUND CONDEMNED TO DEATH.
TO BE ELECTROCUTED ON THURSDAY.
NO NEED FOR JURY TO RETIRE.

SCENE IN COURT.

DISTRICT-ATTORNEY COPE NOBLY RESIGNS RATHER THAN
CONDEMN HIS FRIEND.

HIS OTHER ROMANTIC REASONS ; DISAPPEARANCE ;
REPORTED SUICIDE.

COUNSEL FOR DEFENCE FAINTS ON HEARING VERDICT.
OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE TAKES ALL BY SURPRISE.

PRISONER CALM. FALSE NAME. FORGER. BLUE BLOOD.

INTERVIEW WITH CITY ENGINEER DOOLITTLE.

LODO'S ELECTRIC PLANT AT.

10,000 VOLTS PRESSURE AT A PINCH.

SOME MORE PARTICULARS REGARDING THE CHAIR.

CHAPTER VII

I SPENT the following three days confined in the bowels of Box's sloop. Perhaps they were about the meanest days I ever put in. The cabin was eight feet by six, and smelt like the black-hole of a slaver ; so much so that I could not bear it for long at a time, and took to roosting on the ladder which led down to it, for hours at a time, with my nose just above deck level.

The sloop was a five-tonner, and was moored a hundred yards from the shore. It would have been better for my peace of mind had it been moored in mid-ocean ; for the craving to get to the shore which was so near, to be up and doing something, and to see how things were panning out, was maddening.

On Tuesday old Box and the judge never came near me in the daytime, but swelled about on shore and had a good time. At night they rowed out to me with stores in the sloop's dingey, and reported progress.

I found Judge Hornblick an exceedingly able, dig-

nified and shrewd partner ; but Orlando Box proved a great anxiety to us.

The first motion passed at our first meeting on board had been that Orlando would best contribute to the success of our enterprise by keeping his mouth shut and doing nothing. It was a sagacious notion, as the judge and I agreed ; but Box did not see it, and refused to be bound by it. He said it hurt him. Consequently, the judge spent most of Tuesday in keeping his eye on the consul. He did this good-naturedly, I know, and with the dignity which always encompassed him ; but Box discovered it, and resented it. He contended peevishly that in signing the will he had not contracted to take on the judge as a second shadow. The judge said that was so, that Box had reason in what he said, and that it should not occur again. It didn't ; for in the small hours of Wednesday morning the judge somehow happened to jump into the dingey and row away from the sloop by himself—in a fit of abstraction as he apologetically informed Box when he returned again at night.

So Orlando kept me company on Wednesday, and we had a tranquil time of it after the first ten minutes. These were not tranquil. For the first few seconds of them Orlando's voice raged out wrathfully over the grey and tranquil waters in a way which made me sick, and then, for the balance of them, I held him down by the throat and reasoned with him in a whisper. He

calmed down uncommonly quickly under this treatment, and became a trifle black in the face as well. I showed him my pistol, too, close to his nose, and explained to him how the hair-trigger worked; nor did I mince my words, for I was in earnest. After this his conduct was subdued and exemplary. A more arrant coward than the British Vice-Consul I never met.

The judge came back at night full of news and in high spirits. His tidings were indeed cheering.

To begin with, the wire had been laid satisfactorily from the electric works to the prison, and the electrocution was to take place at 8 a.m. sharp on the morrow. He had managed to get himself elected one of the representative citizens who were to be present at it. He had also hired a covered van to take the corpse to the embalmer the moment the ceremony was over.

He had seen poor Vine, and brought tragic accounts of her.

"She flew into my arms like a crazy woman close by the telegraph office, and I detained her and gently consoled with her," said the judge. "They say she has telegraphed to everybody of any account, from the President downwards, to stop the execution, and she appealed to me in the open street to use my influence. I said I would do so, and she looked as though she'd like to kiss me for saying it. She says it is all a diabolical plot of the scoundrel the late district-attorney, and I agreed with her. But I tell you, gentlemen, I

believe I'd have weakened and let you slide twenty years ago if a woman had looked at me then as she did to-day. Her eyes looked like a dying doe's. As it was, I didn't feel like staying around her, so I went and had a drink. Folks in general don't take much stock in what she says though, and allow that she's crazy with love for the bloomin' Britisher. How d'ye feel, Jimmy, eh?"

The judge paused to poke his thumb into my ribs, and then continued—

"I happened around to Tommy's stand, and asked him to come barracuda fishing by moonlight to-morrow night. Can't figure what you see wrong in that boy, friend Box. He treated me with all respect, and was ever so flattered. He said he'd come if Abe could come too, and I said, Why, certainly, bring Abe along. But I reckon to work in another fit of abstraction some-ways just about the time Abe's figuring on how to get into the dingey. It's wonderful how fits of abstraction will strike a man. Tommy will never feel the want of Abe when once he sees you, friend Box; but maybe he mightn't feel like starting out without Abe."

Old Box didn't like the judge's tone, but he kept his mouth shut. He was learning some, I thought. I suppose neither the judge nor I could help our contempt for him; but it was a pity we couldn't.

I ventured on shore that night. It was rash, and the judge was against it; but I felt drawn to go. Curiously

enough, an overpowering craving to see Vine for the last time possessed me.


The judge rowed me ashore, and we left old Box on board, under protest. We were wrong in this, and should have remembered that even the meanest worm will turn.

Once ashore the judge left me, and went to his rooms to sleep.

For a wonder the moon was clouded, and the night was dark and hot ; and, as I stumbled my way up the rough cliff trail, a feeling of intense loneliness and sadness came over me. When halfway up, I paused and listened to the waves gently sighing among the boulders on the shore below, and to the distant roar of the bar far away seaward. I had often—hundreds of times—been alone in the darkness of the night, but had never realised its significance, or felt it and its encompassing arms as I felt them then. I might have been the only man in the world as I stood in the darkness on that cliff, and listened to the sighing sea, which seemed to sing to my heart a song of surpassing sadness and hurt it strangely, and which brought the tears to my eyes. I don't know why it was ; but so I stood and stared into the darkness, and as I stood and stared the darkness seemed to gather and press me closely and coldly until I shuddered and was afraid as I had never been before. I don't know how long I stood thus, but while I stood all desire to move left me. I was quite

sensible; for I heard my own panting, and felt the quick beating of my heart. Perhaps it was only the immensity and blackness of the universe before my eyes that terrified me so, and made me feel the strange yearnings and hopes that were pleasant in spite of my fear, and which I have felt but once again. Perhaps my state was abnormal. I think it was, the feelings were so very strange, and changed my views of life so for the time. But, I say, I don't know. At any rate for a little while that night old Box and the judge faded out of all my plans for the future, and I thought no more of Tommy; and, when I gained the top of the cliff and saw a light burning far away, it was a beacon light for me, and all my hate fled away to the winds and my heart leapt as I made for it. It seemed to me that all was to be well, and that thenceforward I was to walk the higher, purer road—Vine's road, with Vine, after all.

I ran to that light headlong. The window whence it shone was wide open, and I saw Vine kneeling within, with her head bowed low over her bed. She was praying, and looked beautiful. I vaulted into that window unhesitatingly, and with happy assurance. It seemed that nothing could hinder me now, and I stole towards her, hundreds of thoughts rushing through my mind as I did so and transforming me to myself. I reached for her, put my arm round her waist, and whispered her name, and she turned and looked at me.



I shall never forget, and never lose sight of her face as it looked then. As I made my way down the cliff again my heart felt as dead and cold as a stone. I paused at the spot where I had paused before, and shook my fist at the universe.

When I regained the sloop, old Box greeted me with—

“Hullo, Whiskers ! How goes it ?”

He lay on the cabin floor with the whisky demijohn close by him.

I laughed and replied—

“Hullo, old Chin-beard ! How’s tricks ?”

His only reply was a grunt, as he pulled his thin old legs up under his chin and went to sleep. He was full of whisky, and I was glad of it ; for it seemed to have driven away his temper and made him satisfied with his lot. There was a miserable slyness about old Box.

I lay on deck that night—lay long awake, looking up at the stars and listening to the consul’s snores coming up through the hatchway. When at last I fell asleep, it was to dream of Vine’s face.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN I awoke the grey light of morning had come, and something lay across my eyes. It was a slip of paper bearing the words—

“DEAR OLD WHISKERS,—Am going ashore to make things hum and look after the judge. Be good to yourself. You’ll find the demijohn in the cabin. Ta, ta. Box.”

My opinion of Box when I read this was past expression, or even thought, so I simply lay weakly where I was and tried to compass it. There was no need to look over the side of the sloop for the dingey. I could see it from where I lay, moored to its accustomed pile on the water front, where a few stray loafers and boatmen were already stirring. Several times I was seized with a mad desire to swim ashore at all hazards and bring Box back by the scruff of his neck. I should have done it had it yet been dark and Lodo sleeping, but, desperate though the situation was, the reason that

on just about the spot where it would land. I screwed one of my eyes clear of the blanket and looked up through the hatch; but the 'longshoreman craned over and looked down at the same moment, and I screwed my eye in again.

"If you reckon I'm going down there to have you drop that lump of lead on my head you'll get left. Phew! How the place smells," remarked the 'longshoreman.

"I'll go. Make way there. Here she goes."

It was Levinsky who spoke, and it was he who went, or rather slid down the ladder plumb on to my shins. He was only a matter of some two hundred pounds, but was very painful all the same, and I squealed. He didn't, though I heard his nose hit the corner of the locker—that is, he didn't until after he had picked me up, blankets and all, and bundled me into a corner. Then he did, in fact he roared like a bull, and the 'longshoreman heard him and laughed.

"Never seen such a man," said he. "First he squeals like a baby and then he roars like a bull."

I could have given Levinsky a hundred dollars there and then for tacitly owning up to my squeal, but I'm glad I didn't. The judge had done it already.

They got the bath down at last, and Levinsky made a tremendous noise all the time. I never in my life heard such a grunting and banging and scraping as Levinsky made. The 'longshoreman thought he was

drunk, and told him so candidly. I thought the same until I made the shocking discovery that the bath was groaning and grunting and making a noise as well, and that Levinsky was trying to outdo the bath. He managed it, and was steadily shouting as he reclinbed the ladder, and I heard his companion trying to reason with him as they rowed away.

I now threw Box's blankets aside and sat up. The bath was planted on the cabin floor and stretched from end to end of it. It was a coffin-like bath, and the grunts and groans which still continued to issue from under its jute covering sounded like the muffled sounds a man would make when awaking from death. They paralysed me for a time, and the horrible conviction came to me that inside that bath Mulready's electrocuted corpse was coming back to life. How this could be I didn't know, for the arrangement had been that we were to receive the corpse, nicely embalmed and ready packed in an air-tight coffin of polished oak with brass fittings, at a point five miles up the coast at one a.m. The judge had contracted with Bates, the embalmer, that this should be so. The question was, had the judge been fooled, or had he, dreaming Mulready dead, thought it wiser to inflict the corpse on me in this diabolical manner?

When I was equal to moving, I moved, not to the abominable bath, but to the ladder, up which I skimmed, quicker than a squirrel, to the deck, where I

lay for a while, whimpering and sweating like the veriest coward. I looked out over the waters. Not a boat was visible, and, it being the luncheon hour, the wharf was deserted. Mulready—for I felt it was Mulready—kept up his groaning down below, and it came up the hatchway and hit on my brain until I wrung my hands and could have screamed. I am not a coward, but my state of demoralisation then was abject and absolute. The wretched man was smothering. I could hear it in his groans ; and it came to a pass at last when I could stand those groans no longer. I would sooner have faced the devil than lie and listen to that man slowly groaning himself to death.

I crept down that ladder slowly and rung by rung, for my feet would hardly hold me. I took out my knife when I got down, and I ripped up that jute covering from end to end. I shut my eyes tight while I did this, and turned away and cowered down on the floor when I had done it. Nothing happened. I wished, I believe I prayed, that the mutilated monster I pictured lying in the bath might rise up and strike me insensible as I cowered there. But he didn't. He only groaned louder and in a manner more suggestive of slow suffocation. A long time went by before I could brace myself to turn and look ; but I did it in the end, and the sudden shock of it overcame me to such a degree that I clung on to the rim of that bath and laughed and cried like an hysterical

girl. The man in the bath who was suffering so was old Box.

He lay, cosily enough, in a mattress round which ropes had been passed and tied in such a manner as to enfold him as a sausage roll enfolds a sausage. His head was free, but a handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, and an elegant three-cornered note was attached to his long-flowing beard with a bit of blue ribbon. He looked like a mummified patriarch awakening to the tune of the trump of doom, and the terror in his eyes was grand—immense.

I untied the blue ribbon leisurely and took the note, and old Box looked at me out of his watery eyes and groaned. That groan and look made me feel real good. They said "Take out the handkerchief or I'll choke" with an eloquence I did not think the old man capable of. But I didn't. Not much. I sat on the edge of the bath and read the note. It was from the judge, and said :—

"DEAR JIMMY,—Found contents lying on shore loaded with whisky. Thinking him dangerous, I send him along by Levinsky at a cost of two hundred dollars. Reckon he's crazy by his talk, but opine he'll be sobered up some by the time he reaches you. Your letting him loose has worried me considerable. All's well.—HORNBLICK."

I formed the opinion that the judge was a genius as I read that note, and have never changed it;

though the fact that genius is sometimes erratic and unreliable has since qualified my admiration for geniuses in general.

His few words of patient rebuke cut me like a knife, and I turned and read the note aloud to Box to see if they would cut him too. It did me infinite good to watch him slowly turning black in the face, and I began to gently reason with him about his conduct. He showed considerable feeling with his eyes as I did this ; and, when I slipped from the rim of the bath, said I was going to Lodo, and requested him to be good to himself while I was away, I thought those bleared old eyes of his were coming with me. I released him then, and took the handkerchief out of his mouth ; for, somehow, those following eyes of his had stirred me to pity, though I had hoped and believed myself pity-proof after my night excursion. There was something nice about the old man, and I grew real sorry for him as I watched him lie in that bath and gasp himself into whimperings. I even felt mean.

He began, after a while, to give vent to detached sentences, somewhat after this fashion, only much less intelligibly—

“Jimmy, old man. I’m going away. Let me go, old man, and I’ll give you everything I have in the world. I’ll go to China, to hell if you like, but I won’t stay here. Let me go, old man.”

I shook my head and said, "Not much." He went on—

"I'm sorry if I played it mean on you last night, Jimmy, old chap. I was full of whisky, full as a tick, and wanted to have a splurge. I don't know how I got ashore, but I got there, and lay down outside Levinsky's for awhile. Sorry, old man. Head going round like a Catharine wheel when I got up, and sun shining like electric light within an inch of my nose ; but I got up and lit out to have my splurge. Sorry, old chap. Ran into some one somewhere in a back street and toppled over, swearing. It was a woman, a pretty woman. She was running like mad, and I started after her like madder ; but she slipped into a shop with a coffin in the window in no time, and I slipped in too. Back room. Fellow in there bending over another fellow lying down with no clothes on. Fellow lying down awful-looking fellow, with a blue face. Other fellow blowing down his nose with a pair of bellows and waving his arms up and down like a blooming pump. Woman looked on. Beautiful woman. Never saw anything like her face. Made me sick, and I thought of what the judge said about that Vine woman, and swore off this job. Let me go, old chap. Woman turned and saw me watching. Came at me like a wildcat, toppled me over again and sat on me. Sorry Jimmy, old man. She was going to kill me, I think, with one of those beastly steel things you

cut open birds with to stuff them, but I asked her not to and she didn't. Think it was my English accent that saved me ; and I believe she cried, and appealed to me, and told me that the fellow with the blue face was a dead Britisher. I thought I heard him groan. I'm not sure, though. I believe the fellow with the bellows made a rush at me then and chucked me out of the shop by the seat of my breeches. I'm not sure of that either. I'm not sure of anything. It was all like a horrid nightmare, and I shall never get over it. I know I shan't. Next thing I knew I was lying where I had lain before outside Levinsky's, and that infernal judge was standing over me. You know what happened then. The beginning part may have been a dream, but that part wasn't. I won't have anything more to do with that man. He is a fiend. I'd run to the edge of the world and jump into space to get away from him. You are bad enough—I mean you're a good chap and will let me go. Eh, old man ? ”

I gave Box a drink, and it made him feel better. I had little doubt that his supposed adventure was the product of whisky, imagination, and a guilty conscience ; but there was enough in it to make me anxious. Had Vine followed Mulready to the embalmer and succeeded in revivifying him ? It was of course out of the question to let an irresponsible gas-bag like him go, and I told him so, and reasoned with him, and proved that the judge's prompt and

skilful action had been for the best, and for the saving of our scheme.

"I should have come ashore and shot you otherwise. The judge is a good fellow, Box, and did you a service. He likes you, too, I know it. Wait till we get to England. We shall both be out of our element then, and shall want you to show us the ropes. We'll have a bully time then, you bet your life on it."

So I talked to him, treating him like a child; and the vacillating old chromo liked it, and calmed down, and by and by went to sleep in his bath. He was much like an overgrown baby in many ways.

CHAPTER IX

I SPENT the balance of the day sitting on the ladder ; trying to fancy the sun moved ; looking out over Lodo, and gnawing a Boulogne sausage. I hated sitting on the ladder, the sun hurt my eyes ; every moment I expected some visible demonstration of discovery to occur in Lodo, and I loathed Boulogne sausage. I did the first three things because I couldn't help it ; the fourth, namely eating the sausage, because I needed sustenance, and a Boulogne is negotiable on a ladder.

Old Box slept steadily, and I counted his snores. He snored fifty thousand four hundred and two times before the sun went down. I did not want the moon ; but up it came full and bright, and in my nervous state I looked upon this as a special visitation of Providence.

Many clocks in Lodo struck the hour, one even struck the quarters, and I kept thinking that I must have missed them, and finding ten minutes later that

I hadn't. It was a weary time, and I longed to wake up the consul so that he might share it. But I controlled myself.

The night was not so still as the day had been, for an off-shore breeze had sprung up. This exercised my mind too, and there was not a moment that I was not fancying, with dread, that the off-shore breeze was changing to an in-shore one. Thanks to it, I could now hear noises on shore more distinctly than ever. Ten thousand cats and one million bull-frogs seemed to woo me as I sat perched on that ladder; and the old wharf creaked, and things flapped and bumped and scraped in an extraordinary manner, causing my heart to throw away a hundred mistaken welcomes to an imaginary judge putting off in an imaginary dingey.

Then a nigger began to sing to his banjo, and I damned that nigger; not that he sang badly, for his song was sweet and came to me twice as plaintive as it left him because of the intervening water. I hated him and his warbling because it made me feel so miserable. I remember the song because he sang it twice right through.

LITTLE CHLO.

I seen a gal long ago, bhoys,
Way down where the tulës ' grow—
Little Chlo, pretty Chlo—
Way down where the tulës grow,
Long ago, long ago.

* Tulë=bulrush.


Oh, and her beautiful eyes
 Seemed to plead like a wounded dove,
 "I am all alone and the daylight dies
 Come to me, love, my love!"
 I went to that dear little gal, bhoys,
 Way down where the tulës grow—
 Little Chlo, pretty Chlo—
 And I kissed her just ever so,
 Long ago, long ago.
 Oh, and my heart seemed to die
 Into hers, and I whispered, Chlo!
 And she clasped my neck and I heard her sigh
 "I love you, my Joe, my Joe!"

I wed my sweet little Chlo, bhoys,
 Way down where the tulës grow—
 Little Chlo, pretty Chlo—
 And I loved her just ever so,
 Long ago, long ago.
 Oh, and the sun seemed to shine
 So bright : and the dear little birds
 Sang that I was hers and that she was mine
 And their song had no need of words.

I lost my poor little Chlo, bhoys,
 She lies where the tulës grow—
 Little Chlo, pretty Chlo
 Way down where the tulës grow,
 Long ago, long ago.
 Oh, and she smiled, bhoys, and sighed,
 And she whispered "My dear old Joe"
 So tender, that somehow I never cried
 For fear I should trouble her as she died,
 My dear little angel, Chlo.

The words don't amount to much, but the way that infernal nigger sobbed them out was enough to give one the jim-jams.

The lights now began to go out in Lodo, and, in my joy, I tried to keep track of them. This meant counting them all over and over again to see that I was not cheating myself. I did it, and they went out ever so slowly, and were nearly all gone when at last the judge appeared. I could only see dimly, but I knew it was the judge. I should feel the judge's presence and dignified movements in blank darkness. There were two others with him. This was well. They were Tommy and Abe. I was sure of Abe by his stature. But Tommy? It was with the greatest anxiety that I tried to focus Tommy, and while I was trying, the judge skipped into the dingey and rowed away by himself. No one spoke, but I very nearly yelled at the judge to tell him his abstraction had come on too soon. He rowed calmly on. I looked for the others. They had disappeared. Then I cursed the judge for a jay. But it was only his genius after all. He had found that a fit of abstraction would be futile if indulged in while starting from the shore, so had instructed the boys to walk round and embark from the end of the wharf. I only caught on to this when I saw it being done, but I was glad then that my curses had not struck home. I knew they had not, for the judge was still in the boat and not at the bottom of



the bay, and his soul was in his body and not—but never mind.

The rest of the manoeuvre was not altogether satisfactory. It went well so far. The judge told Tommy to jump, and he jumped safely into the boat, which the judge at once rowed away in his very best abstraction style and as hard as he could. I saw that, and appreciated it, and rubbed my hands. But then Tommy began to shout like a steam whistle. He didn't seem to fathom the poor judge's taking, or, if he did, he didn't care a continental about it. What he wanted was Abe, who stood on the wharf-end waving his arms like a madman, and he meant to shout and fight till he got him, too. I saw him seize the handles of the judge's oars, and I heard his shouts ringing out over the still waters with overpowering resonance, and then, all in a moment, there was silence for a full half-minute. Then Tommy began to make a noise again, but only for a second, and the noise was like that made by an inflated penny-squeaker when the thumb is momentarily drawn away from its air-vent. I could see and hear all quite plainly now, for the dingey was halfway. It was great. The judge was holding Tommy with calm power under the water by the seat of his pants with one hand while he paddled steadily forward with one oar from the stern of the dingey. The squeaks were when Tommy was yanked up to breathe, but they were of little account

now, and the judge was coming along fine when I heard a splash away at the wharf-end. The judge heard it too, and spluttered—well, never mind. It wasn't a nice word, anyway. Abe had dived into the bay and was swimming for it.

I reached over and caught the dingey's nose all right when it came alongside, and the judge handed Tommy up to me. It was as much as he could do, mind you, and when he had done it he sank down on the dingey's seat and blew and gasped and heaved. As for Tommy, he was more frightened than hurt, and, after I had hitched the boat to the sloop by the painter, I carried him down the ladder and reasoned with him. My main argument was that if he squeaked or shouted again, under the water he would go ; and it answered well. I never saw a boy so amenable to reason.

I borrowed some of old Box's clothes for him, and was adjusting them as best I could when old Box himself rose up from the bath. It was like the rising of a lost soul, and scared Tommy powerfully until he had figured out who it was, and then he went into a proper passion and it took all my strength to hold him. Box was scared too, until he saw I had his foe tight ; and then he turned nasty and asked if those were my clothes I was making so free with. I told him they were his in language that surprised him, and then I skinned up the ladder like a streak and slammed the

hatch behind me, to find that Abe had arrived at the sloop's side, and was addressing the judge, who had now climbed on deck, from the water.

Abe's was a stirring address, and the judge listened to it patiently and with dignity. When it was over he suggested that Abe should go for a swim in the other direction to cool himself down some.

"Swim back, my lad, climb on the wharf again and talk to the moon if you feel like talking. I ain't had my supper yet," said the judge.

But Abe didn't take the advice. No. He swam to the side of the sloop, grasped the deck-rail and began to haul himself on board. The judge sighed, and taking a mop-stick calmly played the big drum with it on Abe's knuckles until Abe let go. Then Abe addressed the judge again. There was considerable passion in his voice this time; in fact the boy sobbed, and beat the water with his clenched fists. This pleased the judge, who dropped the mop-stick, bit off a chew of tobacco, took the tiller in his hand, and settled himself down to listen. I listened too, while I hoisted sail; but Abe soon quit talking when the sail began to belly to the wind, and he came at the deck-rail again. There was plenty of grit and loyalty about Abe, and I felt sorry for him. The judge, however, felt for the mop-stick. The sloop was moving now, and Abe held on to that rail like a drowning cat, while the moonlight played on his clenched teeth and

the judge played on his knuckles. It was cruel. Suddenly the judge rose up, seized Abe by the wrists and yanked him on board.

"He's the spunkiest kid I ever saw, and where I go he goes," cried the judge when he had done this. His voice trembled and he patted the dripping boy on the back with enthusiasm. The judge loved bravery in any form, and somehow I was glad when I saw Abe yanked out of the silver water, and yet very sorry as well. We didn't want Abe.

The judge talked to Abe for a bit after that, and told him we were taking Tommy home to make his fortune, and were bound to do it by his father's will, and that he should do his best to help us to make Tommy a great man. I never heard anything like the benign calmness and high moral tone of the judge's voice, and it took all the fight out of Abe. He said he had played the drum on Abe's fingers because he reckoned that Abe was going to try and step in between him and his path of duty, but that he felt now that Abe would do what was right and help to make Tommy rich; and Abe said it was so.

We put Abe down the hatchway after a while and let old Box out. Abe went like an angel, and we heard him telling Tommy what the judge had said. Tommy said "bunkum," and when I heard it I sat on the hatch. We were bowling along merrily now, and I gave the boom tackle into old Box's hand so that I might talk

to the judge. This suited Orlando, for he was proud of his sloop and loved sailing her, and it suited me, for I wanted to talk about Box's dream. My narrative proved even more snatchy than his had been, for the great boom kept swinging round as the sloop veered to the wind, and I was ducking my head pretty nearly all the while. But I got through with it after a fashion, and when I had finished the judge smiled and said he had heard it all before.

"It was a jim-jam dream," said he, with judicial calmness that was very soothing and satisfying, "and he was just getting to the end of it when I happened on him lying outside Levinsky's, clawing the air and sweating and groaning. He told me all about it then, and I allow it scared me some, and, after I had packed him up and shipped him off to you, carriage paid, I went round to Bates's and interviewed him. He said he had not seen either Box or Vine, and knew nothing whatever about it. He showed me the coffin already screwed down, and was bound to unscrew it again to show me that Mulready was inside it. I let him unscrew one side, just to test him, and then I asked for a go of whisky before he went further; but he hadn't any. I'd had one private view of Mulready in the chair that morning you know, Jimmy, and it wasn't a chore I should choose for pleasure, and I didn't feel like doing it again without a drink. So I told Bates to screw him up again. A man

don't look like an angel when he's been electrocuted, Jimmy, and there's a savour of burnt flesh around that ain't good for the inside. Old Box had never been near the place. He allowed as much to me at Levinsky's, and couldn't even come near locating it. Bates said that the embalming had gone very satisfactorily, and swore that the casket—he called it a casket, Jimmy, and it is an elegant thing—should be at the point on time to-night. He is a cute man, Bates, and I reckon I saw a light show at the point then. Did I tell you that your friend, Vine, went down to the electric works before it was light this morning and tried to chop through the main wire with a hatchet? They stopped her in the act, and it was lucky for her that she had not got through the outer covering; for electricity was running along that wire at a pressure of some five thousand volts at the time, and would have run along the hatchet and through her pretty near the same. Just like a woman that. No self-control. They say she fought like a tigress."

The judge steered skilfully towards the point as he talked, and we anchored within twenty yards of it. A light now flashed out brightly for the moment and then went out. It was the signal agreed upon, and the consul and I manned the dingey and rowed ashore. Bates received us, and we received the casket from him. Old Box fought shy of it at first, until Bates

laughed at him, and his emotion caused us considerable difficulty in getting it aboard ; but we got it there and covered it over with a tarpaulin.

We put out to sea now, and the judge went down to eat his supper with the boys. An hour passed before he appeared again, and he then expressed the opinion that Tommy was a queer fish, and that Abe would do what Tommy did. I agreed with him.

CHAPTER X

WE reached Wearham on the 1st of August, a fortnight later than we expected, owing to the breaking of the steamer's screw shaft. Mark the power of the pen. Three words, WE GOT THERE, and seven thousand weary miles and twice as many wearier worries and trials are left behind.

A diary of 879 pages, written in a secret cipher of my own, and dealing exclusively with our voyage, lies beside me, and there is not a triviality in it. I meant to produce it in full, for it is very interesting, but my publisher refused to read it—wade through it was his expression. "Boil it down to half a page or so," he says. I will do so.

X+X+X+X+X+X+X+X+X+X+X+X+X.¹

Z+Z+Z+Z+Z+Z+Z+Z+Z+Z+Z.....+Z.²

699 pages are thus disposed of. (See foot-note.) I will abbreviate the rest.

¹ X = Attempted escape on part of Tommy and Abe.

² Z = Squabbles.

Between Lodo and San Francisco the judge and I composed a valedictory address to the people of Lodo explaining our sacred mission and everything else—a fine effort, covering twenty-five pages of diary, and which subsequently monopolised the front sheet of the *Lodo Chronicle*. Also packed casket in bath and covered it with jute. Also gave Abe choice between touching his cap and calling us all Sir whenever he spoke to us, or going overboard. He chose the former. Found that Vine had been tampering with Tommy.

On arrival at San Francisco, funds being low, the judge sold Box's sloop to the first bidder, for the common good. Box asleep, but objected strongly on awaking.

Abe travelled 2nd class and steerage, and Tommy managed to join him in the steerage and could not be excavated.

Did most of the hard work myself. Found the judge preferred to jump in and play to the gallery when all was done; but he was calm and dignified always.

Box, instead of becoming more exuberant, became more subdued on scenting his native air.

Tommy as mean and awkward, always, as any boy could be.

But after a ten-mile drive over the moors we reached Wearham, and the Wearham hearse, by order, and the Wearham population almost to a man, by inclination,

were waiting on the outskirts of the town to receive us. We found that our valedictory address to the people of Lodo had appeared in the London papers, which had even reached Wearham in the course of time ; but we were prepared for anything, though our preparation had reduced our resources to a very low ebb.

I think we made a good show. I am sure of it. We carried the entire proceeds of Box's sloop at forced sale on our backs and in our trunks. Everything depended on our making a good show, and taking up our proper position at the outset, and we did it ; indeed the necessity for this was the first point on which the judge, the consul, and I thoroughly agreed. Old Box was especially hearty about it, perhaps because he was so shabby, and had departed to the Liverpool stores with the sum allotted to him immediately on landing. When, two days later, we appeared in our new costumes, Box was very happy, and said that his was the correct get-up of an English country gentleman. I said nothing. The judge told him to cover up his legs, and asked him whether he was going to play checkers on himself. Box had also bought a large yellow gun-case, and had his name and title printed on it. There were no guns in it, but he said that did not matter. Box retaliated by asking the judge whether he was aping an undertaker or a shop-walker. It was a silly remark, and Box would have

been nearer the mark had he substituted President of the United States. I never saw a finer or more dignified figure than the judge cut in his new clothes. Everything—his new hat, his snowy linen, his new Albert coat, even the Grand Army medal he wore on his breast—was just so.

Old Box became insufferably arrogant and patronising at this time, and the judge and I had words with him on many matters. But his surreptitious engagement of a valet was what enraged us most. He sprung the wretched man on us one midday in the hall of the hotel in which we had taken rooms, and then he swelled around in his checks and abused that valet up and down and all over simply to show us, and the company, that he was used to the business. He turned nasty when the judge asked him where he had picked up that miserable lickspittle slave, saying that the aristocracy always had such adjuncts, and that the man, taking him for a nobleman, had come to him naturally. The judge and I laughed then. We could not help it. The sight of the worm as he cringed about after old Box would have made a Chinaman merry. He was sallow as a sickly Hindoo ; his face was as expressionless as a block of wood, and his eyes were as lustreless as a turtle's. That man was ready to go down on all fours like a Zulu if one looked at him, and old Box, having found this out, bullied him around finely. I took to doing the same in time. I

could not help it ; and it was certainly a relief to my feelings. The judge often made me feel considerably, and Brill—that was his name—came in very handy afterwards. Box said that the correct dress for him was a suit of dark dittos with plenty of shirt front ; and soon as he had given the opinion he went and bought the dittos and shoved Brill into them. He still looked mean as could be ; but the dittos were all of a colour anyway, and his shirt tail did not stick out behind now.

Tommy looked well also. He had a tie, a collar, a new hat, and even suspenders, all of which the judge and I adjusted by force while Box was destroying the old flannel shirt and sombrero. We had thrown away enough kindness on Tommy, and his forcible adornment was the first step in the course of stern discipline which we now contemplated. I hated that boy.

But Abe was by far the smartest of all. We took special pains over him, and a fashionable Liverpool tailor helped us. Abe had a tall hat—a very tall one with a broad gold band round it. He had a red vest, and a coat with gold buttons fixed on to it in front and behind and pretty nearly everywhere else where a button could be located with decency. Abe and his hat together measured a good bit over seven feet in length. The consul wanted a cockade fixed into that hat on account of the judge being a General too, but the judge said it must be either a small

American flag or nothing ; whereupon Box curled his lip and dropped the subject. We kept Abe touching that hat most of the way between Liverpool and Wearham.

I indulged in one little bit of vanity, which was the wearing of a sky-blue sash I had worn as a Marshal in the Fourth of July procession at Lodo. It was a badge of honour, and I donned it in the train, and Box was rude and silly about it too, and asked me whether I was going to my first ball, or had joined the Blue Ribbon Army. Box thought he was mighty knowing about England, but all the same the Wearham natives never looked at him, while they thought everything of me because of that sash.

We unloaded on the outskirts of the town and processed up the main street. We thought it right to do this, and it was a solemn, silent business and impressed the crowd. Abe walked first with his hat in his hand, and then came poor Charles Mulready in the hearse—a poor one-horse glass-panel affair, from the hinder end of which two feet of bath was bound to stick out no matter how it was worked. This would have spoilt things some ; but Box for once in a way had a happy inspiration, and, rushing to his portmanteau, yanked out a silk Union Jack—the only thing he had found worth stealing from the Lodo Consulate—and we draped the rear end of the bath with it. The effect was great. The judge and I followed the hearse with

Tommy between us. We held Tommy's hands ; very much so. We also bared our heads, as did old Box and Brill, who brought up the rear. It was immense.

Many people addressed us on the way, and there was much excitement and cheering and hooting, but we were far too solemn to speak or take notice. I believe the judge prayed, or tried to. Anyway he looked mighty good and made noises in his throat that scared me till I looked at his face.

There were some very respectable-looking people around ; among them Lister, of Codling and Lister, and the Reverend Clement T. Whales ; but we ignored them all alike while we were processing, though it did not hinder us from taking stock of Wearham as we moved along. It was not difficult, and I had the place assessed and weighed long before we reached the Mulready Arms. There was a main street called Mulready Street, and a statue which was of a Mulready, and an alms-house which claimed a Mulready as its founder. The village—it was nothing more—was a pretty one, with yew trees and apple trees, and green painted railings and thatched roofs, but from top to bottom it was a Mulready-stained village, and even the town pump bore the Mulready arms. I spotted the bank where poor Charles had cashed his cheque—a little building having a notice in its window that it was opened for business twice a week, which seemed to me an ample provision for the Wearham popula-

tion, which could not have numbered more than fifteen hundred souls, all of which seemed to be in the keeping of the great Mulreadys, and most of which followed us to the Mulready Arms.

We had engaged rooms by wire, and found the landlord and his staff standing to receive us on the steps of the front entrance over which swung a coat of arms, the Mulready arms, Tommy's arms, OUR arms. A slight difficulty occurred now which threatened unpleasantness, but panned out well in the end.

The fact of it was that we had forgotten to announce, or engage accommodation for, one of our party, namely poor Charles. It was a foolish oversight. I had not reckoned him in as a paying guest, but I tried to put it right by saying he should share my room. The landlord, however, objected very strongly to receiving poor Charles at all, and his staff was with him, every man and woman of it—especially the women ; and the representative of the Wearham police force who was present concurred, though I assured them all that Charles was warranted to keep in any climate. The crowd, too, which, though noisy and quarrelsome, had not hitherto interfered with us, began now to throng round the hearse and discuss the matter noisily, jostling us in a manner that rattled me and tried my temper considerably. One thing I swore, and it was that I would die before giving up the custody of that bath ; but the landlord swore just as

firmly that he would have no corpses on his premises, and he could swear more confidently than I could, because his staff and the police were backing him, and there was no other hotel in Wearham. Things in fact were becoming exceedingly awkward, when the judge stepped up those front steps one by one and took up his position calmly and with great dignity beside the landlord. He had seen his opportunity of playing to the gallery, and had risen to it.

Now the judge could rise finely when he liked, and he did so then, far above the landlord and his staff and all of us. There he stood, brave as a lion, his fine old head reared proudly and his white hair blowing in the summer breeze. The crowd stopped wrangling when they saw him ; and the landlord ceased to act like an aggressive bulldog and became a subservient landlord, and the policeman took to studying his eighteen-inch regulation boots. It was the sight of that calm, intellectual face and commanding presence that did it. I have never seen the judge look finer. There was nothing of the mountebank, or pettifogger, or half-breed about him, nor did he feel that way. He felt like a distinguished gentleman gambling for the high stake of fifty thousand pounds a year, and that he was worthy so to gamble, and could do it well, and would not be trifled with while he did it.

"Take it out and put it right here on this step," cried the judge. He shot out his arm commandingly as he

said it, and the crowd kept silence while they watched him, and the men we had paid to help load the hearse unloaded it and put the bath where he bade them. He now pulled out his pocket-knife, ripped up the jute covering, bent over the bath, and yanked out the casket unassisted. It was a feat of strength very few young men could have accomplished. When he had done it, he kicked the empty bath down the stone steps and deposited the elegant casket in its place.

"Thomas Mulready, my lad, come here."

I still held Tommy's hand tight, but I gripped it tighter yet as I led him up to the judge, who placed him standing on the coffin. We stood on either side of him, holding his hands, through which we communicated to him that silence was necessary. His discipline had been somewhat drastic of late, and he minded us. The crowd stood gaping in front, and when the judge was ready he addressed it. He did not rant, he talked the downright quiet talk of a brave and honest man. His knowledge of the world and of men was far ahead of theirs, and he knew it, and how to work in it. Simply and naturally he took them all into his confidence and told them our whole story, not as candidly as I have told it, perhaps, but a hundred times more takingly. It was a noble story as he told it, and we had left our homes, our country, our prospects, and all that we held most dear, in order to stand by the outcast Britisher who had been our friend.

"Are you the Englishmen I have read about and heard about and longed to see and shake by the hand—my cousins who still stand by the dear old Mother Country?" he asked. "If so, we shall meet with fair play, not foul play, and the upholding of right by right and not of wrong by wrong. We have brought home your countryman to you by his own last wish, which we solemnly undertook to fulfil. Whatever his past, he was our friend and played fair by us, and, by the heavens above, we will play fair by him. Is it a fight you want? We can fight, and we will fight if need be, but we mean to fight fair, and believe we shall meet fair and honest fighters. Do you reckon we came all this way and left our all for the sake of a holiday trip? Charles Mulready lies dead here." (The judge tapped the casket with his knuckles.) "His son stands living before you. Could poor Charles awake, and speak, and move, I believe his first words would be words of heartfelt thanks to us, and his first act to shake my friend the British Consul" (Box fidgeted uneasily), "my fellow countryman who holds his son's hand" (I didn't fidget), "and myself by the hand. This poor lad" (the judge patted Tommy affectionately on the shoulder) "is the son he loved. He is only a young helpless lad who cannot yet act for himself, but I, as a judge of the Supreme Court of my own great country, pledge you my word that he is the lawful owner of this town, and of every mine, acre,

and belonging of the Mulready estate, even to this very hotel whose tenant now refuses shelter to his dead father, and we, his father's friends, mean to see that he gets his own. Fraud? Did any one say fraud? Do you think that I, who have spent my life in trying to serve my country faithfully, would leave it and my record behind to back a fraud? If you think so—you the Mulready tenants—you will wake up to the truth with a mighty rude shock. This boy is Mulready of Mulready Castle by right and by law as surely as the sun shines, and not a written word is wanting to prove it to all the judges and all the peers of good old England. Take heed in time of what an old man tells you. Now, sir" (the judge turned suddenly and fiercely on the landlord of the Mulready Arms), "I demand in the name of this lad, Thomas Mulready, that this casket may be set in the finest room which your house contains, and duly honoured, else you are not the man to continue long the tenant of the Mulready Arms, nor shall you do so."

I believe I have a natural tendency towards lying, and even find it difficult sometimes to tell the exact truth without embellishment herein; but I could not, if I wanted to, embellish the judge's magnificent demeanour on this occasion, or the telling effect which his manner as much as his words had upon his audience. It dawned upon me then as I watched and listened to him that I could never have become

President of the United States. Mine was not the stuff of which big men are made; it was not the judge's stuff. He was a genius playing like a prince and with conviction for a princely stake; I was an attorney knowingly scheming a gigantic fraud. His was that power—blessed, cursed, call it what you will—of throwing himself and thinking himself into any cause which he undertook with a whole-soul ardour and fervour that clothed him with grandeur, and his words with an eloquence that carried his audience and himself alike to conviction; mine was the power of planning and thinking knowingly, deliberately, and in cold blood. When once launched into speech, words were to him as is morphia to the morphia fiend, and he became exhilarated and morally uplifted by them, as did his hearers. I am told that a great English statesman was wont, once on a time, to be similarly affected when pleading unsound causes, and can well believe it, having heard the judge seemingly prove that wrong spelt right. When he had said his say and swept the crowd with his eye, he sailed serenely into the hotel, leading Tommy by the hand. There was no more trouble, and the casket followed at his heels.

Box and I joined him in the coffee-room five minutes later, and found him sitting with his feet on the mantel with a quart of champagne by his side. Tommy was helping him to drink this, and we did likewise. The consul, finding it much to his taste,

grandly ordered another bottle, though I jingled the small change in my pocket ominously ; and the waiter, when he brought it, brought a card along with it. Codling and Winter were the owners of the card, and I wrote on its back, "Fatigued. Will discuss business to-morrow." The waiter brought a courteous note in reply, suggesting the hour of 11 a.m. on the morrow, at Codling and Lister's offices, to which I replied equally courteously, "We meet at the Castle, or nowhere." The reply to this, when it came late in the evening, was satisfactory. It said that the Castle 'bus would wait on us at 10.30 in the morning.

Another card, bearing the name "The Rev. Clement T. Whale," shortly followed, and I passed it to Box, who passed it to the judge.

"Reverend, eh ! Fine talker, I presume. Show him in," said the judge.

Tommy was by this time asleep on the horsehair sofa, so I did not object.

CHAPTER XI

"**I** HAVE come, as Vicar of the parish, to greet you," said Clement when he had got inside, "and—and perhaps I had better lock this door, eh? Prying eyes, listening ears, and popish spies are all over this neighbourhood now."

Clement locked the door. He was strongly moved.

"I—I have not the honour of knowing you, sirs," he continued, "but I heard one of you make a manly speech just now, and know that you are American gentlemen who have come to this country to right an English lad for the sake of his dead father, who was your friend. I come to side with you and offer you my sympathy, and to ask you to join hands with me in fighting the fight of my church."

Clement was a big man, some sixty years of age, and an aristocrat of the old school, with courtly manners and an open, red face that spoke simplicity and good faith, and with that in his eyes which proclaimed him a staunch fighter for principle who meant

honestly and well, and wholly in spite of the bee that kept buzzing and bothering somewhere up in his bonnet. He stood now upright in front of us, looking squarely out of his blue eyes, and I didn't like those eyes. They reminded me of Tommy's. The judge seemed uncomfortable too, and it was Box who, half full of champagne, said flippantly, "Have a drink, will you?"

The remark jarred miserably, and jars still when I think of Clement's face when he heard it. I have seldom seen the judge's eyes glint as they did then, and they cowed Box and sobered him; but it was Clement himself who routed Box by simply looking into his face. It was weak of old Box to apologise, mind you, and still weaker of him to leave the room when he had done it; but I reckon nine men out of ten would have done the same if Clement had looked at them so.

The judge and I now shook hands with Clement. We felt that he was a good and simple man, and, though painful and awkward, we could not help respecting these attributes of his at first any more than one can help taking off one's hat on first entering a church.

The whole interview was nasty, and the judge said afterwards that he felt as though he had been telling lies to a little child; but we got through with it, and I returned Clement's hearty parting hand-grip with

interest. The judge did the same, but said it was the meanest thing he had ever done. I didn't feel that way, for, from a business point of view, the preacher's visit was immense, and we knew pretty well everything worth knowing about the state of affairs in Wearham by the time he had run down.

He did the talking mostly, and started in by asking our religious views. This was ticklish, but the judge sized up Clement's clothes and answered in accordance with them. He told me afterwards that he knew Clement was low, because his vest and collar did not button at the back, and so he allowed at once that he was also low, inclining towards lower. I played for safety, and said I was inclined to agree with the judge. Clement's eyes grew moist for a moment when he heard us speak so, and he wrung our hands again, and then he started in to talk. Wearham, according to him, was in a state of spiritual turmoil which threatened to end in bloodshed. Mulready Castle, the owners of which had for centuries conducted themselves with irreproachable orthodoxy, was now in the hands of a popish boy and a band of popish Mexican half-breeds, who in their turn were in the hands of the boy's guardian, Señor Andrade, who, it appeared, had declared that every tenant and dependent on the estate should either become a Romanist forthwith or quit. Clement showed us a letter written to him by the boy Vivian at his guardian's instigation, and there

was plenty of right-down religion in that letter. It began by casually announcing that the augmentation of his yearly income, hitherto allowed by the Mulreadys, would cease from that date. Then it said that "Señor Andrade, my guardian and administrator," will visit the church for the purpose of taking away the silver ornaments, and all other things in it that were the exclusive property of the Mulreadys. Then came a lengthy argument, with which many abusive epithets were mingled, which all tended to show that our friend Whale was destined to experience a very much hotter climate; and the letter ended with the sentence, "A dog-whip hangs in the Castle hall."

"I am in debt, gentlemen," cried Clement, "and the subsidy from the Castle is the chief part of my income; but, subsidy or not, I would die for the dear old church I love, and the majority of my people feel as I feel. I may say that I have provided my sexton with a shot-gun in case Señor Andrade should invite its use, and a body of my parishioners is watching the church at this moment. Think of it. A boy—a mere half-bred Mexican boy—dares to write to me like that! But, mark me, that black-faced, evil-looking Jesuitical fanatic Andrade is at the bottom of it all. The boy is a brave, pretty boy enough."

Clement was feeling considerable; in fact he spoke as though his heart were breaking, and did not weigh

or limit his words as he might have done ; but we did not interrupt him, certainly not, and it was half-past ten o'clock before we shook that final hand-shake, and became his pledged supporters.

"It is a good deal, judge, whichever way you figure on it," I said, when Clement was gone. "You see it's this way. Our new fellow-churchmen feel that they'll either have to become Roman Catholics, or lie down in the mud and let other Roman Catholics walk over them, or knock that young popish half-breed skiting out of Mulready Castle and put us in. I judge from Clement's talk and show of feeling that the whole place is on the boil about this thing, and that his side is the biggest, and will shove behind us for all it is worth. What are we now, judge, anyway ? Frauds ? Not much. We are right down honest and staunch low-churchmen, pledged to accept fifty thousand pounds a year for conscience' sake, with a hip, hip, hoorah for the good old Church of England. It's great, and shake hands on it, judge."

"You are right, Jimmy," said the judge, shaking my hand ; and then, turning to Tommy, who still lay on the sofa, he poked him in the ribs with his toe and told him it was bedtime.

Tommy sat up.

"I have heard every word," he said, with compressed lips.

I took him by the ear, but the boy jerked his head

away and reared it like a game-cock. He was always bound to fight.

"I shall not come. I am going to that minister and shall tell him——"

The judge and I carried Tommy to bed at this point of his remark, so he never finished it.

He fought all the way, and we had an extraordinary time with him that night, which ended in catastrophe. Grit ! Abe was gritty enough, but he was soft beside Tommy. From first to last that boy was the meanest, cussedest one to deal with I ever struck. There was no bend in him anywhere.

"Seems rough, I allow," said the judge, unwinding his arm from about Tommy's head and sitting down on the corner of a trunk when I had safely locked the bedroom door ; "but you see, Tommy, my boy, you are our principal stock-in-trade, and we are bound to be mighty particular about you." The judge ducked his head to avoid a hair-brush which Tommy hurled from behind the dressing-table, and then continued : "I like spirit, and admire true grit, but you will learn, my boy, as you grow older and wiser, that they are alike futile in the face of the inevitable. You see those three beds. The inevitable to-night is that you shall lie on the middle one ; that Charles Mulready shall lie in his casket under you, and that your friend Jimmy shall lie on one side of you while I lie on the other. There is no escaping this, and it rests with you to do

your part quietly, willingly, and at once, or noisily, unwillingly, and after bodily suffering. They say a man hangs all the quicker when he kicks, Tommy."

The judge's reasoning did not seem to add to the boy's composure, and, not wanting a scene, I put in a conciliatory word.

"My dear boy," I said, "be reasonable, and there ain't anything we won't do for you ; be manly, and there ain't anything you won't be able to do for yourself. Listen to me. There are two things every boy must learn before he becomes a man, or worth a bean : the first, how advantageous it is to accommodate himself to circumstances ; the second, how to accommodate those circumstances to his own advantage. Now——" I stopped. My advice seemed to rile the boy more than the judge's, and he stepped out from behind that dressing-table and up to me where I stood in the middle of the floor. I always hated his eyes, and never have been able to meet them square, somehow, and did not then. He stood there in front of me, blazing and panting with passion, his hands clenched firmly at his sides and his head held high—as fine a looking boy as I ever saw, if he had only been reasonable—and fought for mastery of himself for fully half a minute ; and I smiled as I watched him askance, because his passion seemed so boylike and futile. Then he spoke to me, and spoke truth, I know, because it sounded so unpleasant, and jarred so against

all that was convenient and advantageous and proper. He looked unpleasant, too, more like a wild beast than a boy, and I did not like it, and picked up the centre part of a boot-tree which happened to be on the floor.

"Look me in the eyes, you, you, you with the face like a dead man," he cried. "Even the judge and the Britisher can do that. You are frauds and murderers and bullies, all of you; but the judge is a man in spite of that, and the Britisher don't know enough to be one. But you! You have lost your manhood—thrown it down and smothered it in right down pure meanness that makes me loathe you as I loathe a maggot. Think I haven't sized up that you reckon to help yourselves by letting on to help me? What do you take me for, anyway? You were friendly enough to my father to murder him, and I think you'll do the same for me before you are through—and, though I'm young, I often wish you would. The shame of it all is killing me. But you'll not win. That woman, Vine, with the beautiful eyes, who came to me crying when I didn't understand, knows the truth, and God will guide her. Fight? Yes, you bet I'll fight against meanness and fraud till I'm dead, and here's a beginning. Abe!"

Tommy raised his fist as he yelled the name, and would have struck me, but I brought the boot-tree down on his head, and he staggered back like a bullock mishit with a pole-axe. I was sorry I had hit him so,

but his eyes had scared me while his words had somehow made me mad ; but the feel of the blow came as a shock to me, and the sound of it made the judge jump to his feet and raise his fist with an oath. The feel of that blow dazed Tommy and made him act same as a chicken with its head cut off, or a cat with a broken back. I never saw a boy twist and turn and spin round as Tom did then, and the sight of his burning eyes and the blood running down his face weakened the judge and me so that for awhile all was silent, and we stood like fools watching that boy staggering around and clutching at nothing. A wild hoot broke the silence. It had been cruel enough, but the sudden wild hoot which broke it beat anything I have ever struck in the shock line. It came from below, outside the big French window of our room, and no words can describe how it sounded. Perhaps the fact that it made Judge Hornblick start and blanch will convey as much as anything, certainly ten times more than that it made me into one great big hammering heart from head to heel. It hit on Tommy's ear too, and, dazed as he was, he made for it headlong, with much the same reasoning power, I should judge, and in much the same manner as a moth makes for a candle ; and so sudden was his crazy rush that he was over the railing of the balcony outside the window while the judge and I were still standing listening for the thud of his fall and staring

I took the cue, sat down on the ground, and forcibly pulling old Box's head on to my knee, wiped it with my handkerchief. Box seemed glad enough to rest his head anywhere, and the judge, seeing my action, turned to me, saying—

“Be gentle with him, James. Friends, let us all bow our heads and humbly and silently thank a merciful Providence.”

Our heads were already bare, and the judge, when he saw this was so, clasped his hands and turned up his eyes instead. He did it simply and reverently, and looked so nice and venerable with the moonlight playing on his white hair, that many of those present did as he did. Quite a crowd had collected by this time. When he was through with his praying, he asked the crowd to disperse and leave.

“Carry that poor fellow in and care for him tenderly. He has suffered such a shock as he will never forget. Leave me, leave me, friends. My whole soul is shaken and I would be alone with the night,” said the judge. His voice trembled and his eyes looked ever so as he said it, and they took old Box and carried him inside as gently as his state would permit, because the judge had asked them to do so.

As for me, I sat where I was while that crowd dispersed, marvelling. The judge had lied, and his lies, coming from an ordinary mouth would have sounded common and clap-trap, but coming from his, on the

top of all the excitement, and as he stood bareheaded in the moonlight, they had impressed even me, and made me wonder whether I was dreaming. I had no desire to get up. The man's face and figure absorbed me, and I sat where I was, watching his jaw working from side to side, and scared by the look that was on his face. He was plainly powerfully moved, and, when at last we were alone, he turned and spoke to me, not angrily or noisily, but gently, as one man would speak to another who had betrayed him in a great and noble cause.

"Jimmy," he said, "I believe that boy was right, and that you are mean and little and only half a man. That blow of yours was a mean and cowardly blow, and hit me a hundred times harder than it hit the lad—hit me till I found I had a heart that could yet jump up into my throat. The blow went through me, Jimmy, same as though you had cut clean through the quick of my nail, and I was drawn to kill you when I saw it, till I looked at you. Then, Jimmy, you appeared too mean and little to be worth the killing. His words made you mad? I allow it; but you were scared, Jimmy, and I despise cowardice; and the lad was brave and spoke up like a man. I joined you in this gamble believing you to be white. I will try to believe it still; but next time you act the Greaser will be the last time if I'm around to see it. Now I reckon we'd better circle round and find those kids."

I got up and followed the judge, but I did not answer him. He had called me a coward and there was no answer. The judge had called me a coward.

We circled round all night, but did not find the boys. When I lay down to try and rest in the early morning the judge's words were still with me. They are with me still.

CHAPTER XII

"IF it is admissible to apply such an expression to a boy, I should call Vivian Mulready piquante. I should call his Mexican crew a scandal to the neighbourhood."

Lister, of Codling & Lister, made this remark to the judge and me as we walked through the Mulready estate on the following morning to keep our appointment.

"I trust you are wrong," replied the judge, "for though I was never acquainted with a piquante male, a piquante female was my first great disappointment in life. I was eighteen or thereabouts then, and she was—well, never mind—but she danced behind the foot-lights and I worshipped her in silence from the front of them for six months or more. I dared not speak to her, for her hair was all golden like an angel's, and her eyes had a way of looking up ever so pathetically and paralysing the young. One night she looked at me out of the corners of those eyes, and next day we went

buggy-riding together. I was crazy with love for her, gentlemen, when I boarded that buggy, and my hands trembled so that I could scarcely hold the reins. We were quiet for a while, and then, somehow, my hand touched hers and it started me. I tell you, gentlemen, I poured out my soul all over that girl in a way that fairly astonished me and made me giddy. Poetry, passion, love, and everything that was loftiest and best in me came sizzling out and lifted me up till the buggy seemed to be fairly flying, winging its way to heaven. When I was through I looked into her eyes, and she bridled and sniggered and said—

“ ‘Well. You are a cough drop.’ ”

“I reckon it was female piquancy, gentlemen, but it made me upset that buggy into a ditch and walk home alone all the same.”

I was glad to hear the judge talking so, and, though I did not feel like it, laughed loudly, same as a school-boy laughs at a school-teacher's joke. Lister also made a noise meant to simulate laughter, but he was plainly thinking of other things—probably trying to digest the sick headache which I had informed him was confining Tommy to his bed. I don't suppose he could laugh anyway. One would as soon look for laughter from a funeral mute as from a cautious, solemn-faced chromo like Lister ; but he couldn't be happy, for he was just sitting on the fence between us and Vivian, trying to decide on which side to climb

down. We pumped considerable from him, though, and learnt that Codling was laid up, with the gout for a companion, and that Señor Andrade had called him (Lister) a "descolorido tonto," and so politely that he had taken it for a compliment until, on looking it out in a dictionary, he had found it to mean "a white-livered idiot." We touched, too, on the question of Vivian Mulready's credentials, and were told that his certificate of birth was regular and had been verified, and that his identity was undeniable. But Lister was foolishly tentative and cautious.

The morning being a fine one we had sent the 'bus home tenantless, preferring to walk and take in all that was possible of our new estate. The hearse, with poor Charles inside it, followed behind. We brought him along because we figured it would be as well to get him identified and buried. Box we had left behind with instructions to scour the country for Tommy and Abe.

Lister pointed out the boundaries of our property as we walked along. We were satisfied with it. The Cheviot hills were all around us and showed up green and soft in the distance like a scalloped band of embossed velvet. More than one peak of them served to mark the boundaries of the estate, and the intervening scenery, though perhaps a trifle wild for England, was varied, elegant, and wonderfully sleek-looking to a California-inured eye. We walked

through a mile of woods, not wild, sombre tangles of trees of the same species such as are ours, but well-kept groupings of half a hundred varieties, all green, sturdy, and luxuriant in foliage as only England can make them. Green was everywhere, dark, light, parti-coloured, and of a hundred shades, each blending into each so richly and softly that, seeing the whole from afar, one longed to go run and roll in it ; and the sun touched all into a warmth so glowing that it fairly caressed the eyes.

We came kerwallop on the park when we left the woods, and the judge halted to take stock of it, and to look over the shoulder of a painter who was trying to paint the scene. I looked too, and I can't say how I despised that painter sitting there smiling and dabbing as though it were all just as easy as rolling off a log. Paint ! He might just as well have started to try and create the universe as paint that picture. And the nerve of him ! He'd dab in a square mile of scenery, that must have cost the Creator a power of thinking to make it so elegant, just as casually and confidently as a nigger whitewashing a fence, and then he'd look up and smile as though he'd improved the original. I questioned some whether he was painting upside down, but Lister said it wasn't so. It was all the same anyway ; for everything was blurred and hazed and the wrong colour, and it was same as a picture puzzle to locate anything at all.

Lister took off his hat and bowed so low when we left that the judge asked him why he did it, and whether the painter was crazy.

"I fancy not," said Lister, smiling at the judge as I have seen a butler smile at a shabby guest. "The artist we have just left is Sir Didymus Dauby, R.A., the leader of the English Impressionist School of painting."

"Just starting in with that picture, I presume?" I queried; and Lister replied patronisingly—

"The picture is practically finished. He idealises, you know. The picture will cost £600 at least. A wonderful picture."

We walked along in silence for a while, our eyes roving over the beautiful scene, and then the judge said—

"Well. It may not satisfy that genius there, but I reckon we'll take the place as it is and be satisfied, Jimmy. Some folks may fancy blue mists instead of streams, and grass that is no colour in particular. A castle may appear solider to some when it looks like a cow-house looming up in a fog, and I opine, Jimmy, there are folks who prefer a picture that looks as though a dozen aurora-borealises had been mixed up into a hotch-potch and then spread about promiscuous. But I'll take that castle nestling there and peeking out from among the trees, and the stream with its willows and lights and shadows, and the park that looks like the Promised Land, and those grain fields where the

sun is pouring down a shower of gold, and the soft hills far away as I find them, and I'll not kick any because that fellow can't paint the real thing by the square mile to suit his fancy."

"Hulloa. Look!" I cried.

A horseman had emerged from the trees which girdled the castle and was speeding towards us in a bee-line across the park. We halted again to watch him, and the judge remarked that he must be a Mexican vacquero reared in the saddle from birth. On he came, riding headlong with loose rein and extraordinary grace and ease. He evidently saw us, and we inferred that he was young from the way he executed feats of horsemanship as he came, through pure delight in his skill. He was well worth watching, and seemed to know it; and, when within fifty yards, he picked up a bit of sheep wool from the ground as he galloped by it to show what he could do, and laughed a ringing laugh that was full of music and went through me like the song of a bird. Showing off. Nothing else. But I forgave that, and could see the judge did likewise, because he was the winningest, gracefulest looking youngster we had ever seen.

"It is Vivian Mulready," said Lister, turning and running for all he was worth lest the rider should ride him down.

We stood our ground, knowing the ways of vacqueros, and watched the mustang suddenly straighten its legs

in response to a bridle check, bound jerkily forward for ten yards stiff as a ramrod and like a bouncing ball, and then stop dead within five feet of us, with a final jerk that made it tremble, and would have sent a Britisher flying out of a British saddle.

"Buenos dias. Good morning," cried Vivian, holding out his hand heartily.

It is hard to believe, but we took that hand eagerly, both of us, and I sized up Vivian as I did so.

It was the eyes, I think, that subjugated us so—eyes soft and bold, laughing and winning as a woman's all at once—such as would have sent Murillo crazy with delight. I am not sure, though. Old Box, when he saw Vivian later, said it was the mouth that attracted him so. The judge said nothing then or afterwards, but he thought a pile, I saw. Never have I seen hair so black and glossy as Vivian's, or a face so perfect in contour and colour, or a head set on so nobly. Few know how to sit a horse, but the sight of Vivian sitting there in his Mexican saddle, with his hat held high above his head, satisfied one. It seemed right that he should be there, a part, and the gracefulest part, of the whole outfit. There was nothing about him, from his curly head away down along his nattily cut Norfolk jacket to his riding-boots, half hidden in the broad Mexican stirrups, that was not just so; and the sight of him made me for a moment feel just anyhow, and I judged that the judge was feeling as I felt. There

was an influence about Vivian I could not account for.


Somehow the whole experience was a disarming shock. We had expected defiance and a fight, and had nerved ourselves up to it, and here was this Vivian taking off his hat like a Spanish grandee, and greeting us as heartily and winningly as though we were his best friends. It fairly rattled me, and the judge even, for a time, lost his balance and grip of things.

We walked on either side of Vivian to the castle, listening to his laughter and talk—talk that was English, but broken to suit the softness and idiom of the Spanish tongue. We were to stay at the castle, he said, until things were arranged. “Naturalmente” we were to do so, for didn’t we honestly believe it belonged to us, and was he going to refuse us shelter after we had come so far? The judge allowed we’d stay. I didn’t like it, but the charm of Vivian and his imperious ways beat everything. I understood now what Lister had meant.

Did we like England? Where was the boy we had brought? Were not the people slow and funny; and wasn’t their talk hard to understand? What did we think of the English girls? Pink and white, and a little lacking in audacity, eh? But what did we think of English girls?

So Vivian ran on, laughing and vivacious as is a boy when enjoying some novel excitement, until he reached

the castle gates and met the eyes of the man who issued from them ; but then Vivian's rattling talk stopped suddenly, and all the snap seemed to go out of him. This man was Andrade, and his face sobered me, too, and brought a sour look to the judge's lips same as though he was taking a suck at a lemon. Andrade did not come to meet us as Vivian had done, but stood there, leaning against the carved stone gate-post, looking at us. There was little question about his nationality ; still less about his individuality and strength of character. He was a Mexican, not half-bred, but pure bred, and he was a devil of the same strain. Six feet high I should think he was, and powerfully built, though spare ; and his hands and feet were so small as to seem out of proportion to the rest of him. I reckon Andrade was about forty years old, and his face must have been handsome in youth, but was now drawn into lines which, while they made it more striking and stronger, hit upon the sense in a way that made one instinctively brace oneself and clench the hands. Looking at that man, it seemed that his mind, baffled by his will in finding expression through his eyes, had revenged itself by painting those lines on his face and thereby stamping his character there. His eyes told nothing. They were not fine eyes, neither were they dead or lustreless. They were simply latent, conveying nothing to me as I met them but a feeling of disquietude at their hidden possibilities.



He smiled courteously as we neared him, but that smile expressed a hundred things as well as courtesy, nor did it alter the firm set of his jaw.

The judge held out his hand by way of greeting, but Andrade happened at the same moment to use his right hand to raise his hat. The act was intentional, and I felt it so, and marked that the judge eyed him viciously ; but there was nothing to take hold of or complain about in the way that hat was raised. It was done politely, and with a distinguished air ; yet, somehow, it was an insult, and expressed even more than the smile had done.

Vivian spoke no more now, but Andrade talked pleasantly and with an entire absence of all feeling as we traversed the short distance which divided us from the castle. Now and then, when he addressed himself especially to Lister, he assumed a bullying tone which seemed to frighten Lister considerably ; but his voice was always soft when speaking to us, and was especially so when he asked politely where Tommy was—whether he was in the hearse. He was looking at me as I answered, and I felt that Tommy's sick headache came out lamely because of it ; but there was not a gleam in his eyes as he listened, or a grate in his soft voice when he remarked how deplorable sick headaches were. The castle was a fine irregular ivy-clad old building, with turrets and fancy mouldings all over it, and large enough for a State Capitol. It bulged some

at its base, which seemed a pity, but the guide-book which I had found at the hotel said it wasn't so. It argued that the bulges were the remains of seven-hundred-year-old bastions, and said they were fine because of their age. Perhaps this was so ; but it was a dead sure thing that the castle could never look slick and trim while those bulges hung mouldering around it ; and I decided then and there to have them, and many other mouldy-looking objects, removed soon as we got settled down. I only got a glimpse of the castle then, but it was sufficient to fire me, and I determined to take a hold of that castle and bring it up to date. It was great now ; I determined to make it immense—the finest modern residence in the world.

CHAPTER XIII

SIR JACOB JENKINSON, Q.C., was another surprise to us, neither was he any slouch. We found him sitting in the oak-lined library with a pen and ink handy, and he loomed up fine sitting there with an acre or so of bookshelves all around him. Lister had summoned him by wire to watch the proceedings, and told us of it when we reached the library door. I reckon the little sneak expected us to turn tail and run when we heard it ; but he got left, for his news did not scare us any. We knew our law was solid. I am not going to report our day's work. This is not a law report, and my publisher objects to legal matter as dry. If, however, any readers think differently, they can have a detailed account of the proceedings by applying to the address which I give at the end of this book, and sending along five guineas with the application. In my own opinion the investment will repay them, and they will certainly get their money's worth of talk, for the great clock over the

stables was striking 7 p.m. before our meeting was finally over. I read the will, and it astonished Sir Jacob, while it gave him nothing to take hold of. He tried his best to mar it, mind you, and with a subtlety and smartness which astonished me in a Britisher ; but we argued it out, clause by clause, and it came out of the ordeal unblemished, in spite of Jacob and Lister and Andrade and the sharp little dark-faced attorney who stood at his right hand.

The judge next read a certified transcript from the shorthand notes taken at poor Charles's trial. He did this to establish poor Charles's identity and sanity, and he established them both solid. Proof of Tommy's identity and legitimacy followed, which Jacob allowed to be uncontrovertible ; and it was here that Andrade intervened for the first time by remarking that we had not as yet produced Tommy. His voice showed some feeling and jarred for the first time as he said this, and he smiled wickedly when I again produced the sick headache. Many other points were raised and argued and demolished by us, and it was five o'clock in the afternoon when we adjourned to view the corpse ; but the time seemed short to me because of the intense professional pride I experienced as each point discussed was established in our favour ; and I don't think I have ever enjoyed anything more than listening to the judge's masterly and dignified exposition of the English Probate laws as applied to the

case in point. It was, indeed, noble, and took poor Jacob's breath out of him, till at last he sat mute and insignificant-looking as any police-court pettifogger. I was actually moved by a sort of professional pity as I watched the man, for he was no slouch. There was no give in our law. It was solid, and Jacob had not a show.

We opened up poor Charles in the great coach-house, and it has seldom been my lot to look on faces more excited and varied in expression than were those grouped around the casket. Vivian, who had only been present at intervals during our discussion, looked mighty like fainting, and was properly scared, as were the many dark-faced men-servants who, attracted as servants are wont to be by the chance of a sight of death, hovered around in the background. Lister was frightened, too, and seemed to think he was about to see a spook; and I, strangely enough, trembled some, though I kept telling myself that my deputy got poor Charles electrocuted, and not I.

The judge broke the seals with which the casket was sealed. He was as calm as a coroner. Andrade stood close by him with a face as impassive as a Chinaman's. I think they were the only two who showed no signs of agitation as the undertaker's man who had driven the hearse began to unscrew the screws, screw by screw. Every one craned forward

now, same for all the world as a pack of farmyard geese around a barking puppy-dog, and when that lid began to rise I almost hoped the casket might be empty, or loaded with sand, just to disappoint them and take away my tremble. I had no hankering after seeing poor Charles, and confess it; and, were I writing a romance instead of a true history, I would have it so, and would just rush poor Charles in at the finish of the book all alive, virtuous and kicking, to confound the machinations of the wicked. This would be great, and would please everybody ever so, and I should like to do it; but, as a matter of fact, when that lid came up Charles was lying beneath it with a broken nose, due to jolting, but otherwise in prime condition and looking fine. There was no mistaking his face or his toes, and Lister was ready to swear to both as soon as he saw them; but there was something else, a golden cross on Charles's forehead which Lister knew nothing about, but which flashed out and seemed to hit me between the eyes. I was the only one present who could have sworn to it.

There ain't anything in crosses anyway, but I have always hated to see them, and the sight of this golden one lying there shining between the closed dead eyes knocked me so for a moment that I staggered, and would have fallen but for the judge. It was Vine's cross. I had seen it and hated it a hundred times as it lay below her throat. What is a cross, anyway?

A simple ornament that I—any nigger—can buy and wear if we want to, and it wouldn't amount to anything for all the wearing. But hang it round the neck of a woman like Vine, and meet her eyes looking out from above it, and it means something then. I tell you that same miserable golden thing now lying on Charles's forehead had acted same as a double-strand barbed-wire fence between her and me as it lay on her breast hundreds of times before ever she knew of Charles, and it stared at me now same as though she were speaking, so that I weakened when I saw it, and believe I should have let up on the whole business right there if the judge hadn't glanced at me and then gripped me under the coat tails in the small of my back as a greyhound grips a hare, and nipped me so that I lost sight of the cross and everything else from sheer pain. He was a great man in emergencies was the judge.

I had purposely left the will lying on the library table when we went to view Charles, but it was not there when the judge and I regained the room. I had hoped for this, and the fact made me feel real good. It was only an attested copy; but I had no doubt that Andrade, who seemed to know but little of legal matters, had taken it for the real thing, and I told the judge of it. We were alone, and my communication sent him walking up and down that library with his head bent and his hands clasped behind him like

Napoleon. I augured something from his abstraction, and I was right, for he let go at Andrade when at length he and the others appeared and trounced him with as fine a speech about honour and manliness as I ever listened to. They were wrangling together some time when they entered, but the judge's outburst of righteous indignation stopped that, and they stood to attention and listened.

"It is not for me to say who was responsible for, or who took that document," thundered the judge, looking squarely at Andrade, "but whoever it may have been was a mean, dishonourable scoundrel, and clumsy, ignorant, and stupid beyond belief."

I was looking at Andrade while the judge said this, and the look on his face made me look at the judge. He was not fooling, but meant his words, and his voice trembled with a genuine ring of hatred and scorn which caused light to leap up behind Andrade's eyes for the first time. The judge's feeling surprised me. Those two men hated each other, and it was hard to say which hated most.

"You lie," said Andrade to the judge, and then I ran between them; for, somehow, I knew Andrade was speaking truth.

The abstraction of the will seemed to affect Sir Jacob greatly, and there was some cordiality in his handshake when he said goodbye to us. Two things he allowed—one, that if Tommy was legitimate and

could be produced, the property was undoubtedly his by right, even should the will be proved unsound ; the second that, whether the will was genuine or not, it was an exceedingly able document. He told us, further, that Andrade had decided to dispute everything on Vivian's behalf, and insinuated that he thought but little of Andrade. He would have said more, I have no doubt, but old Box blundered in at this point, and Sir Jacob retreated.

Andrade brought Box in. We had sent a note to him at the Mulready Arms earlier in the day, instructing him to bring Tommy to the castle as soon as he found him, and Abe and the baggage along with him. The first thing he said on entering was—

“O ! Tommy is ever so sorry about it, and sends his love, but his toothache is so bad that he'd rather stay in bed for to-night and come along bright and early in the morning.”

The deliberate utterance of this inconvenient lie seemed intentional on Box's part, and evidently tickled his fancy. It pleased Andrade also, and made him smile as he conducted us upstairs to our rooms. There were four of these, three bedrooms and a sitting or common room. We found Vivian in the latter busily engaged putting in little final touches here and there, and making things generally comfortable for us. The judge's whole attention seemed to be taken up in glaring at Andrade, but I watched Vivian closely as he

moved about, deftly touching and moving things with a hand so light and an instinct so cunning as to arouse my admiration. I tried to picture Tommy or Abe acting so, but the attempt was a failure.

They left us soon, and when I had locked the door I assaulted Box with my tongue about his clumsy lie, and failure to find Tommy. Mine were stinging and contemptuous words, and I laid them on in the way that I hoped would hurt him most; for I felt that I could afford to do this after my day's work, and that it was better to exasperate him into a fight right there, and then bully him into subservience, rather than have him again splashing in irresponsibly at odd moments and spoiling all. I wanted to down him as an active partner in our concern for all time, and so I went for him as though he were himself and Andrade and Jacob and the painter and all my enemies merged into one and set up to be shied at; and I shied at him with my tongue and enjoyed it, while I gripped my pistol in my pocket and watched him like a cat.

Box won. He didn't fight. He had no fight in him, but he won all the same by simply standing and listening for awhile as though he didn't care whether he listened or not, and then sitting down and lighting a cigarette in a manner that knocked my eloquence into space. The judge saw it, and remarked—

"Quit it, Jimmy. Can't you see something ails the man? A squib will always fizzle so long as no one

has been fooling with its tail and wet it. Who's been wetting your tail anyway, Box?" said the judge, turning nastily on Box. "Run against a church, maybe, and upset the holy water over yourself? Or is it love, my son? A hot-headed wind-bag like you don't change into a deaf-mute with a face like a church-window saint for nothing. He wasn't built for a Job, eh, Jimmy? Is it a woman, Box?"

Box raised his head and met the judge's eyes calmly and steadily; actions so remarkable, that I shouted—

"A woman it is."

"A woman it is," Box repeated, so simply and quietly that I should have jumped on him right then, had not the judge raised his hand; and, for the moment, I hated the judge and his hand and his cool, cutting voice.

"Beautiful," said he. "A woman it is who has chastened him with love and tears. 'And it came to pass afterward that he loved the woman in the valley of Mulready whose name was——'" The judge paused, but Box did not fill the blank. There he sat, silently smoking his cigarette with a saintly calm too riling for anything, while the judge and I hammered him with words that would have made the awkwardest mule in creation kick. He knew something—for a wonder he knew something—but not another word would he say of his day's doings, or of Tommy or Abe, or of anything at all, but sat gazing calmly at us in a

way so unsatisfactory and unnatural that at last I rushed at him and shook him, and would have struck him if the judge had not again intervened. And then the great dinner gong sounded from below, and we were forced to leave him victor and hurry to our rooms.

CHAPTER XIV

I WAS not accustomed at that time to claw-hammer coats, and the unusual adjustment of shirt-front and tie which the scantiness of evening vests involves bothered me considerably. I also have a habit of trying to see everything as I go along. Thus, though we were all late for dinner, I was latest. I did not lose myself on my way to the drawing-room, but was prepared to appear to have done so at a moment's notice, and thereby account naturally for the wanderings I indulged in. I entered at least a dozen rooms before encountering any one, many of them large and finely furnished; most of them unused and artificially darkened by down-drawn blinds; all of them surprisingly clean and English-looking, considering the fact that greasers and their servants had been in possession for six months. I met a maid-servant now. She was a pretty Southern girl, and I smiled at her and asked her the way to the staircase. It was a foolish question, for the little minx had been watching me and had seen me deliberately pass it more than once, and she told me so in Spanish with a toss of her head.

I thought it advisable, under the circumstances, to give her five shillings.

On reaching the grand hall I was attracted by a dim light coming through the chink of an unlatched door. The door attracted me as much as the light, it being a finely carved massive affair, and on slipping through it abstractedly I found myself in the chapel—a gloomy place, smelling some of sickly scent. Thanks to the many little lamps and candles that hung above and stood in front of a fine assortment of gaily painted images that looked as though they were having a solemn, mystic game of puss-in-the-corner all to themselves, and scared me some at first, I could see enough to enable me to judge that considerable alterations had lately taken place here, and that the images themselves were brand-new arrivals but recently plunked down amid incongruous surroundings. They were the forlornest - looking objects imaginable, notwithstanding all their bright colour, and, after looking at them for awhile, the sight of the great candlesticks standing on the table under the bay window was a relief to my eyes. These were of solid silver. I know this, because I took the trouble to walk up the steps atop of which the table stood, so that I might assess one of them. But I dropped it again mighty quickly. A man or a spook all dressed in white, who seemed to glide up to me from nowhere, made me drop it, and I left that chapel on the run.

Andrade met me in the hall with a bow and a smile, and said : " Yes. Those candlesticks are of silver. Your interest in my church is flattering, and I regret that it should have ended in alarm. Your pardon. All do not understand and appreciate American ways, and, to the simple priest, your invasion of the altar may have appeared sacrilegious, and your seizure of the silver ornament—what shall I say ?—suspicious ? But, how foolish ! You will generously pardon him, I am sure. Will you follow me ? "

I liked Andrade's tone about as well as I like the hiss of a snake in the grass, and his smile shed about as much warmth on me as an icicle down my back would have done. I tried to get out some remark about having lost myself, but it wouldn't come ; so I followed him, cursing myself for a jay all the way, and wondering at the change in him. His clothes struck me first. They were black, all black, unrelieved by shirt-front, and they fitted him with a fitness that transformed him. They were priest's clothes. I knew enough for that ; and he seemed to have donned with them a dignity, and consciousness of being able to command, that made me first pettishly resent the fact that I was following him, and then clench my hands and vow to show him some day who was boss, and make him feel as mean as I was feeling. I never kept my vow. I never wanted to again. So we passed silently in single file down the long armour-lined

gallery which led to the drawing-room, on the threshold of which he paused to turn and face me as I advanced ; nor did he move when I had reached his side, but continued to look at me steadily, and I as steadily met his regard. A thousand words could not express what his eyes, lit for once by the mind behind them, expressed then ; and not the judge, not another man on earth, I believe, could have made me thrill and feel and respond as I did then. Our flash of communion was but momentary, not one whit longer than the first flash of love-light between lovers' eyes, neither was it in its way one whit less comprehensive and sympathetic. One interchange of mind between eye and eye, one instinctive mutual bound of like nature to like, and then I found myself advancing through the open drawing-room door, wondering how I ever could have been repelled by the man who followed in my wake ; knowing that he knew me now even as I knew him ; regretting with an intensity of feeling that hurt me that I had not come to know him before, even as a woman must regret when she meets the eyes of the lover she guiltily loves too late, and feels that his spirit is kindred to her own, his nature her nature, his ways the ways she loves.

I thought at first that old Box was the only occupant of the huge room. He was sitting in an armchair close by the door, playing with the brass buttons of his white vest with an expression of smug complacence on his

face, and smelling outrageously, having thought it well-bred to scent his beard. I had hated Box for a long time, but now I loathed him and his scented beard, and wondered how I had ever come to associate myself with him.

The same thought came irresistibly to me with regard to the judge when I saw him and Vivian advancing from the far end of the room.

My eyes met his just as they had met Andrade's a moment before, but the effect was in no way the same. The judge was great, and I knew it, but his greatness did not attract me, but rather made me hate him because it was not mine to share. I resented that his weapons, impulse, genius, and fire, could never be mine, and I instinctively turned again to Andrade to find and meet that in his eyes which the judge's lacked. I found him looking at Vivian, and I looked in the same direction. Vivian's face was flushed, and his eyes were bright with excitement. I have seldom seen any one look more beautiful than he did then. He was not dressed as we were, but wore a loose sack coat of black velvet such as painters wear, and a Byron collar which revealed a throat round and soft as any girl's. His eyes were lowered, as though afraid to meet Andrade's, and his lips were half pouting, half trembling like those of a frightened, spoiled child. Something about him led me to look at the judge again, and this second glance satisfied me that something of more than ordinary interest had happened.

We trooped out of the room, the judge, Box, and I in the van. No opportunity of speaking to the judge occurred, but, as we traversed the long corridor which divided the rooms, a sudden little squeal of pain caused us to turn our heads simultaneously in time to see Andrade quickly release Vivian's hand. The action seemed a natural one, but somehow it made the judge flush and clench his hands, and informed me that Andrade had found means to emphasise the displeasure and warning which his eyes had already expressed.

I made a mighty poor dinner, so did the judge and Box and Vivian and his guardian. It was a good dinner, mind you, unmarred by excess of garlic or Chili pepper, or oil, or any other Mexican messes so disquieting to the inside; neither did anything of particular interest occur at it; but we all seemed to be suffering from a general disquietude of the soul, which the Mexican servants, who hovered about us, seemed to share instinctively: for they hovered on tip-toe. An unsatisfactory sense of strain pervaded everything, and what conversation there was lacked spontaneity.

The judge talked. He even tried to joke and be merry; but his preoccupation was patent, and I didn't altogether like his way. We seemed, somehow, to have been thrown out of touch and further apart since I had met Andrade's eyes.

Box steadily preserved his attitude of self-satisfied silence, and his smugness of appearance, and miserable

entering into the spirit of the contest, openly abetted him. I could not understand the judge's mood, and it scared me.

A whisper, covertly exchanged between Vivian and the judge, was the beginning of the end. I was riled to see them whispering so, but the effect of that whisper on Andrade was remarkable. Vivian must have known it would be so, for he slipped round the table fearfully as soon as he had whispered, and gave vent to a sound that was half a laugh and half a cry as he slipped. I thought the priest, as he sprang forward, was going for the judge, and the judge thought so too and squared himself to receive the onslaught. But it was not so. Andrade went for Vivian—went for him with his eyes blazing like a wild-cat's. The sight was a cruel one, but I am glad I saw it—saw Andrade lose control over himself for the first and last time. There was no mistaking Vivian's cry when he saw the priest's pursuing face. It was a terrible cry now, like that of a woman in mortal terror, and the boy crouched down to the ground when he had made it, seemingly robbed by sheer dread of all power of thought or motion. I did not wonder. Andrade looked a devil as he made for Vivian, and his grip on the boy's shoulders when he caught him and the look in his eyes were about as cruel as anything I have seen. I was glad at the swiftness of it all. So quick was it, that the look of abject terror on Vivian's face seemed to be still visible

after the door had slammed between us and the infuriated priest who bore him away in his arms. I managed to catch the judge by the coat tails, but he left them behind in my hands and made for the door like a raging madman ; and I cannot express how glad I was when I saw by his futile wrenches at the handle that Andrade had turned the key behind him.

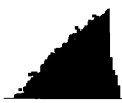
There was less give about that door than there had been about that at the Mulready Arms. This must have been so, or the judge, in the first fury of his indignation, would have got to the other side of it. I didn't interfere with him further, but just let him rip and tear away in his tailless coat for all he was worth. There were some times when one could not interfere with the judge. Old Box lit another pipe and sat down. He tried to do these things scornfully and calmly, but the whiteness of his face and the tremble of his hand as he held the match showed that the judge's infuriated conduct scared him considerably. It scared me too while it lasted, and I reckoned the man had gone crazy. I could account for his rage and general way of acting throughout the evening in no other way. He allowed with a shout that he would kill Andrade, and no one who heard the tone of his voice could doubt the genuineness of his aspirations. He called the door—no matter what, but that door got many names it had no right to, and he consigned it to—no matter where, but he consigned it, and called on many Bible folks to

do the same. He started in to kick the thick oak panels, and, though he did so with the utmost seriousness of purpose, and though the rush and wholeness of his anger gave each kick a force and meaning that were immense, he lost dignity. Even a white-haired man with a noble face like the judge cannot abandon himself to kicking and raging and look dignified all the time, and for once in a way he forgot his dignity, and I saw it, and the fact gave me nerve to tell him that he was acting like a jay, and to mind the paint. I tell you it sobered and shocked him to hear me speak to him so, and first he turned, and then he gulped, and then he laughed and allowed he was an ass ; but he didn't look as though he thought so, and his laugh had about the same ring of genuineness as an election speech. He sat down now and said he must have been crazy to act so, because, after all, he didn't care a continental what became of the little popish brat ; in fact the sooner he was choked the better it would be. The judge got through a pile of talk during the next ten minutes. He said the cruelty of the thing, and the sight of a big man jumping on a little one was what had unsettled him for the moment, but now he saw it was for the best, and Andrade could boil Vivian for all he cared. I suppose he felt he was overdoing it somehow, for he turned suddenly on old Box and abused him up and down for nothing in particular, and then he turned on me and told me I was cold-blooded

enough to freeze a volcano. Yes. The judge talked mighty hard for those ten minutes, but he didn't fool me. He was trying to make light of his extraordinary show of feeling, and to make us forget it, and to regain his dignity, and I felt it, and resented it, and knew he was not playing square but playing 'possum. But he got back his dignity all the same, and I felt that he had done so, and so did Box, and we neither of us felt like running foul of it.

None of us let on at first that we heard the door stealthily unlocked from the outside, though we all heard it. Box was the first to do so. He said he was tired and thought he would go to bed. I didn't like the way in which he said this any better than I had liked his abnormal state during the entire evening, and determined to watch him carefully. Box went, and the judge presently remarked that he reckoned he would do the same. I liked his manner less than Box's, and determined to watch him also. We went upstairs together, talking about Box as we went, and the judge agreed with me that he should be watched, and said he would take the first half of the night if I would take the second.

"The old fool has got mixed up with some woman, Jimmy," said the judge, "and I mean to stop it, you bet your life I do. You are right, Jimmy, he is trying to fool us, and reckons to move out when we are asleep. But we will hobble the old mule before he has



time to stray. Here is his door. Let us have a look at him."

We did so. Box, already undressed, was making preparations for a night of solid sleep, and, when we appeared, began yawning and rubbing his eyes with childish ostentation, saying that he was just dead-beat with fatigue. We left him so, and heard him skip into bed as we shut the door with a bump and much creaking of springs.

"He meant us to hear that," said Hornblick as we shook hands. "Turn in and sleep, Jimmy, my son, and don't worry. Your watch will start at two o'clock. Remember that. Good-night, Jimmy."

The judge was very cordial and gripped my hand mighty hard, but I didn't like it and it made me mad, so I called to him as he moved away—

"How about Vivian and the priest, judge?"

He turned jerkily and said—

"Let them fight it out between them. It is none of our business anyway."

But this would not do for me in my vexed state, and I said deliberately—

"What did the boy whisper to you, judge; and what passed between you in the drawing-room? What are you hiding, judge, anyway?"

He came close up to me in his masterful way, and stood looking at me with a sort of pity, though his eyes were shining angrily.

"See here, Jimmy," he said. "You will have to learn to bottle your mean little ways and suspicions if we are to pull together. I mean to do as I think best, and tell you what I think best and when I like, and shall be satisfied if you do the same by me. You have not told me what passed between you and that scoundrel priest. Something passed, I know, and it has changed you ; but I am content to trust you, and wait until you feel like telling me. I know little about Vivian yet, save that he hates Andrade ; but I hope to know much. You saw how he dared the priest in all ways he could. That whisper was one of the ways. I believe I have made a discovery. When I am sure of it I will tell you loyally. I ain't a greaser. Good-night, and go to bed. I don't feel like being spied on to-night."

I didn't like the emphasis the judge laid on the italicised I, or his masterful manner, or the slam of his door ; but I slammed my door also, and the sound of it echoed away down the long unexplored corridor at the extreme end of which my room was. I meant it to sound, so that the judge, whose room was midway between mine and Box's, should hear it shut and realise that I was angry. Then I sat down to concentrate my thoughts up to their highest, rapidest thinking point.

no sound as he moved forward to my door. Here he stopped and did as I expected, first trying it to see whether it was locked, and then looking through the keyhole to assure himself that the key was on the inside. I almost despised the man as I watched him and marked the access of confidence which his inspection gave him.

He now moved on to Box's door, and it surprised him some by beginning to open slowly just as he was about to touch its handle. If inartistic in detail, the judge was certainly prompt in action, and the agility with which he sprang aside and straightened himself up against the wall did him credit. Some time passed before any of Box appeared. His door moved at the rate of about an inch a second, not gently and evenly, but spasmodically and tremblingly backward and forward, as though the knowledge of risk was too much for his constitution ; and I found it an exciting pastime awaiting the appearance of his head, and speculating what the judge, now poised and motionless against the wall, would do when it appeared. The head began to show up at last, degree by degree, with exceeding caution, and the judge gathered himself together as though only waiting until enough head should have appeared to spring or strike at.

I know he meant to go for that bearded patriarch Box. My instinct told me so ; but he never did touch that head, for, when we saw it all, it was as the head of

a stranger—a shockingly small head, chinless as that of a chinless ape ; beardless and wrinkled as that of a starved baby ; forlorn and timorous in expression as that of a lost soul—if souls have faces. Old Box had shaved off his beard. That was all ; and although I am not naturally risible, the sight of that little chinless head peering fearfully and pitifully into the corridor set me off travailing with my laughter behind that oak chest with pains so cruel as to make my former shin trouble fade away into nothingness. I was foolish not to laugh audibly and thereby give vent to my abominable inward suffering. The danger of it would have been trifling beside the risk of internal injury I ran ; for the judge laughed loudly enough to drown all noise I might have made ; indeed, after recovering from the first shock of realisation, he made so much clamour that I feared the castle would be alarmed, and it was my fear of this that helped me more than anything. He tried his best not to, mind you, and looked helplessly at my door all the time, but he was still leaning weakly up against the wall and sputtering long after old Box had whipped in his head and slammed his door, and I grew anxious for him at last and longed to reason with him.

The stable clock set him moving again by striking twelve—set him moving with a hurry and sudden energy that was surprising. There was little caution about his actions now, and little ceremony in the way

he hastily opened Box's door, took the key from the inside and turned the lock from without. He was still chuckling as he did this, and continued chuckling while he was securely tying Box's door-handle to my door-handle with a piece of stout cord, but he made little sound after this, and so quick and stealthy were his movements that he was close upon me before I was aware of it, and I had barely time to duck my head behind the oak chest.

The judge discovered the chest with his shin-bone as I had done. I felt the jar of it, and his hand brushed my hair as he came sprawling over. I reckon he felt considerably sick for the little while he sat on the corner of that chest, and it made me feel good to hear him squirming around and drawing his breath in through his teeth ; but he started out again soon, with true grit, and limped away into the darkness, and I crawled out and followed, guided by the little sound he made. A creaking board here and there or the brush of his hand against the wall was all this amounted to. I made as much ; and more than once he stopped to listen to my sound ; but as I stopped when he stopped he was fooled there.

The corridor was a hundred yards long—I reckoned it a mile that night—and twisted some, so that the window at its end did not show up until we were nearly up to it ; but the judge meant to get there, and did so, and I crouched in the darkness some yards

behind and awaited developments. The light was but dim here, the moon being on the other side, and it was as much as I could do to see the shadowy outline of his figure against the window, where he stood drumming with his fingers on the stone sill as if at a loss and anxiously waiting for something or some one to turn up and guide him. Some one soon came. The rustle of a petticoat was all I heard, and a hand as it plucked at his sleeve was all I saw. Then he was gone.

Ten yards is not a long distance, and I was up against that window in less than two seconds; but there was no sign of the judge when I got there. A stone archway showed up dimly to the left of the window, in which direction he had disappeared, but beyond it was utter darkness, and into that darkness I groped my way, my heart raging with jealousy and resentment at his double dealing. I had never deceived him so. I had never wanted to; but now as I stumbled forward, I felt that I could willingly betray him to torture, and I remembered Andrade's eyes, and they seemed to be with me as allies in the darkness. So I stumbled blindly and impetuously forward, reckless for once, and determined at all hazards to find the judge, and confront him and thwart him; nor did I stop until my head had encountered a cross wall of solid stone. I sat down on the floor now. This was not a voluntary action, but the whole weight of my

body had been behind my head, and when next I knew anything I found myself sitting on the floor, against my inclination, and thinking of nothing in particular except stars. I was soon moving again, not impetuously as before, but cautiously, though the rage at my heart was unabated. I could only explore by touch because of the darkness, but it did not take me long to discover that the passage I was in was a *cul de sac*; indeed I had already led up to this discovery with my head, from the crown of which liquid, which I knew to be blood, kept trickling into my eyes as I groped my way back towards the dim light of the window. I did not get there, for my hand came in contact with a door as I groped along the wall. It was locked, but through that door the judge must have gone and I meant to follow. The passage was narrow here, two yards wide at most, and I drew myself up against the opposite wall and was about to hurl myself against the door when I heard the key turn in the lock. I could not see, but I again heard the rustle of skirts, and, darting forward, I seized the woman by the hair and dragged her to the ground. The stupid creature yelled now, but once only, for I knocked her head on the stone flags at the first sound—cruel, perhaps, but the mad exaltation of wrath I felt as I did so was exhilarating and strange to me. She was soon still, and I struck a match and looked at her, to find she was the pretty Southern girl I had met on the stairway earlier in the

evening. I had no doubt that hers was the hand that had plucked at the judge's coat, or that she had been about to act as outpost in the corridor when I caught her by the hair ; and I was glad I had done as I had done.

Leaving her lying, I entered the room whence she had come. My haste was again great now, for though I reckoned five minutes only, at most, had passed since the judge's disappearance, I feared that much might have happened in that time, and, in my desperate anger, I cared not how I came upon them so long as I came quickly.

The room was unoccupied, but a lamp turned low and prettily shaded showed me that it had a tenant. I did not waste much time, but while there I took in all its details, and they puzzled me. It was a dainty room, half bedroom, half boudoir ; half masculine, half feminine. The prettiness of it all and mode of arrangement, even to the dainty silken drapings of the bed, were purely feminine, and it came to me that no man could have arranged things so or lived among them so arranged ; but when my eyes lit on the guns, pistols, lassos, spurs, riding-boots, and many other essentially male accoutrements that were scattered all around, I modified by opinion. The pictures were as puzzling. The Virgin Mary hung alongside a cockfight, and beneath her a toreador was spitting a bull. There was an elegant little *prie-dieu*, but a half-empty box of

cigarettes lay on it ; while, though the attire in the hanging cupboards was all male, it was hung up and distributed around in an eminently female fashion.

A second or two was the time I allowed myself for stock-taking, and then I set about finding another outlet. I found it at once, thanks, I suppose, to the carelessness of the flighty Southern girl I had sobered up in the passage ; and I felt grateful to her ; for I should never have found that secret door if she had taken time to shut it properly, or draw the tapestry tidily in front of it. That door was a genuine mediæval conspirator affair, which I should have studied somewhat under other circumstances, but I went through it then mighty quick and up the winding stone steps beyond it. Moonlight helped me again here, and I was very soon up those steps and peering out through the open trap-door at the top, with my head in the open air. The trap-door led out on to the battlements of the castle, upon which the moon now shone brightly, and I scanned those battlements for the judge, and scanned them in vain. A voice, his voice, suddenly sounding almost at my ear told me of his whereabouts, and made me draw in my head with a spasm. Just below me, on the broad leaded footway which ran around behind the battlements, stood a deck chair, and in it sat the judge, and by it knelt Vivian, with his hands resting on the judge's knee. I did not see all this at once, mind you, for the chair was in the shadow ; but the situa-

tion dawned on me by degrees as I listened to their talk.

I must have missed considerable emotional fooling between those two. Neither a girl nor boy will sob and moan and act miserably in general as Vivian was doing for nothing ; and, if the judge was not fooling, it must have taken a pile of tribulation to move him that way. He didn't boo-oo-oo like Vivian, but he twitched some about his shoulders, and rocked, and kept stroking the boy's curly black hair ; and I figured he was doing the paternal and trying to soothe the lad. Even when Vivian clomb up on to his knee and buried his head in his shirt bosom I kept on thinking so. It seemed natural, like a child coming to an old man in its trouble, I thought. But when the judge patted that curly head and said, ever so softly, "Hush, hush, little girl. I knew you were a girl soon as I saw you," I quit figuring altogether and gave myself to listening and to damning genius. Don't mistake me. There was no love-making between the judge and that boo-ooing young woman. I suppose it was genuine paternal feeling—a kind of sentimental and unnecessary soft-sawneyish paternity aroused by her good looks and winning ways—that touched on the soft side of his genius ; but at first I could not believe that he was not fooling, and then I suspicioned she was playing with him. This was not so. They were both in earnest, she wholly, frankly, and with all

the silly abandonment of a child ; he in that strain of sentimentality, chivalry, idiotcy—call it what you will—which was part of his genius, and traces of which I had already noted and resented.

She was a soft, cuddlesome, winning little girl. That's a fact ; and I got to wondering if possibly I—had I been in the judge's place, and had Vine never killed my heart—could have felt touched by her story, which took so long to tell, and involved so many little girlish appeals and sobs and whispers and shamefaced confidences on her side, and so many pats and strokings and imbecile fatherly comfortings on his. I was not touched. Certainly not. I was riled and exasperated by his softness to her, which meant treachery to me.

His kind, noble face had attracted her, and his silver hair ! She glanced up and touched that hair with her soft hand as she told him this, and then went on to speak of my face in a very unseemly manner, curiously enough using the same simile as Tommy had used, and saying it was like that of a dead man, and frightened her same as her guardian's. She began about her father next, and with him started her story. Such a dear, brave, handsome man he had been, just like the judge. Hers was a strange story, but I knew it to be true because she told it so naturally. She had been born a girl, she said, and then she cried ever so because of it. It seems that her father considered that she might have used better judgment. He allowed,

though, that perhaps it wasn't her fault ; but he had not wanted a girl but a boy, so he went to work to patch up the botch Providence had made of it, and had her christened as a boy and by a name that accommodated itself to the circumstances, and she was treated as a boy, and dressed as a boy, and let run wild on his Mexican rancho same as a boy, so that no one on the place, not even his wife, who died at her birth, knew any different. It was ever so nice for a long time, she said, and her father taught her to ride and shoot and act the boy till she really became like a son to him, and was the loved companion in his lonely life ; nor did he ever let on that he remembered she was a girl, and she almost forgot she was one.

She told all this in Spanish, not abruptly and coolly as I have written it, but discursively ; so modestly sometimes that I could almost feel her blush ; sometimes—when the memories were extra pleasant—with a sort of gay boyish happiness ; while, when she dealt with the deeds they had done together with horse and gun, her voice thrilled with a suppressed excitement that was wholly boyish, and I could well fancy the glow in those big black eyes. But she was always winning as could be, the little devil ; and when she got along to talking of her father growing feeble and dying she went ever so slowly and brokenly, and turned on the water again. I saw the judge stiffen himself and draw his arm closer around her. The priest got hold

of her father before he died, and took possession of him and his house. She shuddered—I could hear it in her voice—when she talked of this time, and of her father's weakness and helplessness and pitiful fear of death ; but after a while I got on to the fact that these priests were Roman priests who had come to prey on a dying man, and that Andrade was the prince of them ; in short, the old man had become priest-ridden, and Andrade had done most of the riding, and had learnt his history and all about him, save that his boy was a girl ; and had finally run across the news of the shipwreck just before he died.

I liked the way Andrade went to work, and the mention of *el diablo*, as she termed him, never failed to rouse her and make the story lively. *El diablo* didn't tell what he knew. Not much. But he got himself appointed guardian of the boy—the *boy*, mind you—and then buried the man off hand and started in to boss things generally. When he had everything on the place sold up, he thought it about time to talk to Vivian, and he talked ever so smoothly and kindly about what a rich boy he was going to be in England, and how he was going to give all his riches to the holy Pope. Yes. I liked the way Andrade seemed to have taken a grip of things, but Vivian did not appreciate it, and seemed to have acted much the same as a female Tommy would have done. There was a deal of dash and grim determination about Andrade's way of

rushing things through that stimulated me, while it made me regret that I had not given myself an equally free hand. He just wouldn't let her be a girl; but I think her story appealed to me far more graphically because she was one, and told it so girlishly. The manner in which he made her swear on a crucifix to do as he bade her was fine; but nothing could have beaten her description of the scene when, with scorn that still rang in her voice, and hysterical boo-ooing, she rashly revealed her real sex to the priest; and her trembling womanish words conveyed his anger on hearing of it with a reality that made the judge tighten his grip on her so that she could scarcely speak. Andrade did not mince matters. I can remember her words.

"And he sent for me, and when I saw his face it seemed to me that he was all hard and bad, and had no heart. He had sold everything I loved, every little thing my father had loved—even the dog that cried so when he died—sold them to strangers for money which he took. I was his boy now, he said—his *muchacho*—and I was fortunate and must do as he told me; and learn to look upon the Virgin as my mother, and to love her a thousand times more than I had ever loved my temporal father, and to sacrifice myself and all I had for her sake, and for the sake of Christendom and the Pope, our Holy Father. But I thought when I looked at his shining eyes that he was mad, and I cried,

and he took my arm, saying morbid sentiment was childish and I must remember I should soon be a man; and then—Oh, I don't know, I don't know, but something came over me that made me laugh and cry and know that I was a girl and was feeling like one, and I knew by the cruel jerk he gave my wrist and glared at me with his devil-eyes that the truth had come to him. Then he struck me down."

She started boo-ooing again now, and the judge baa'd over her like an old sheep while she told how cruel Andrade had been, and how he made her stupid with his eyes and was going to kill her if she ever tried to be a girl again. It was just miserable to listen to those two.

"Nobody seems to want me, but I didn't make myself, did I? I couldn't help it, could I? Why is it? Why is it?" she moaned miserably; and then she knelt down at the judge's knee again like any three-year-old kid saying its prayers, and he started stroking her hair.

I craned forward now, for I wanted to hear what the judge said badly; but he did not speak at once, and, in the silence, a hand gently touched me from behind. I tell you the stealthy touch of that hand was mighty near sending me headlong over the battlements, but I restrained myself and clutched for it as one clutches for a bee when stung, and grasping it, held on to it while I turned round. Somehow I knew it was

Andrade's hand, but when I had once met his eyes in the moonlight I felt no fear—neither did he, for we seemed to have a common wrong, and to know it. As I grasped his hand the judge began to speak, and thus, forgetting our position in our eagerness to hear, we stood hand in hand while we listened to his words.

"Get up, little girl," said he quietly. "Where is your hand? I want to grip it. That way. See? And it means that whatever I do I will try to see fair to my little friend Vivian. Do you trust me, little girl? I ain't going to talk any. I could tell you much about priests and guardians; I could give you my opinion of many things—of yourself, and of cowards who strike women, and of the situation in general, and, above all, of myself. Perhaps this last would be hardest of all to give, little girl; but I ain't going to talk. It wouldn't help any, and you wouldn't understand it. See? You have started an old man thinking and have made a friend. You must be brave and patient, and never tell that Pope's devil anything. Don't cry that way, and don't kiss my hand like that. You say the priest don't know of this place? Good. We will talk here again. Good-night, little one. Gently does it. You go first."

I felt Andrade's hand tighten, and he pulled me down the steps and behind the tapestry which lined Vivian's room.

CHAPTER XVI

I DO not fear young women. It is as natural for them to give way to silly impulses, cry, argue circularly, hysteric, and act generally in the peculiar way of their species as it is for a baby to have the colic. No. I like pretty young women, and have had considerable successful dealings with them ; but I neither reason with them nor with babies. For, why reason with a colicky baby when the bottle of paregoric is handy, or why with a young woman when she is so much more amenable to a money-demulcent, or a counteractive force-treatment ? One woman only have I found unpurchasable and insuppressible, and that woman is Vine.

Of geniuses I had hitherto encountered but one hybrid sample—a judge-genius ; and I have spoken somewhat of how I wrestled with it. Now, however, when I found myself face to face with another hybrid in the shape of a boy-girl, I weakened, and was glad that Andrade stood beside me behind the tapestry.

The judge was great on etiquette, and this, no doubt,

was why he managed to cross the room and to be standing at its outer door before Vivian entered from the stone stairway. Even here he waited only long enough to see her safely into the room, and then, smiling and waving his hand, he departed, shutting the door behind him. I saw this through a slit which Andrade cut in the tapestry with his lancet-like pen-knife. He was nearest to the opening from the stairway, but so engrossed did I become in watching the girl that I very soon forgot his existence. Her first impulse was to follow the judge; indeed she did give a little cry and run to the door with her arms outstretched, but then she stopped and, turning, came and stood irresolutely in front of the big swinging looking-glass, staring into her own frightened eyes. I could see both her back and the reflection of her face from where I stood. She was terribly scared. Her eyes and quickly heaving chest told me this, and the manner in which she kept glancing over her shoulder; but she looked all the prettier because of the flush on her cheeks and the wildness in her eyes. Soon she did a very silly thing, which was to kneel down by her bed, bury her head in her hands and begin to cry and pray at once. It did not surprise me to see Andrade stealing across the room now. I should have done the same in his place. He reached the door and stood with his back to it. Having gained his object, he seemed in no hurry to proceed, but stood smilingly watching the

girl sobbing and muttering little broken disjointed appeals to God, and vainly trying to catch her breath and still her foolishly bobbing head ; while I, behind the hangings, watched his set face, and inwardly contrasted the stern, calm implacableness of his emotion with the weak and womanish abandonment of hers. His face was icily portentous, and his smile showed little pity for her girlish tribulation.

I knew she would turn and look towards that door. I felt his eyes drawing her to do so, and she knelt up and did it very soon ; and then, after throwing out her arms like a child in convulsions, her conduct became curious by reason of its inaction. She did nothing further. Her back and the soft black curling hair above it were all I could see, but I watched them carefully, and they were absolutely motionless for fully two minutes. I wondered how a slender girl could endure to kneel so ; and then I looked at Andrade. He still smiled, but his eyes were fixed now on hers—fixed like a cat's, unwinking, stationary, and with pupils queerly dilated. After two minutes he moved silently towards her, still smiling his fixed smile, but with eyes that neither winked nor moved. Very quietly he moved, very quietly he knelt down opposite Vivian ; and there was no sound for a time save that of his breathing, hers being seemingly suspended. Then he spoke, ever so quietly, playing with his open penknife the while.

"Vivian," said he, "give me your hand." The girl did so passively. He manipulated it for a while, and then slit and turned up her sleeve so that her plump white arm was visible to me, almost to the shoulder-blade.

"Vivian," continued the priest very quietly, "I, your guardian, have come to you to fulfil my promise. You cannot speak, but you are aware of what I am saying. Tell me so by bowing your head. *Bueno.*

"You have broken your vow, Vivian—have turned that kiss with which you touched the crucifix into a Judas-kiss, and have betrayed your Master and hindered the welfare of His Holy Church, and have played fast and loose with my will. The wreck of my hopes and aspirations is little, perhaps, Vivian; but you are sorry and ashamed for it all—so sorry, so bitterly ashamed and bowed down by your sin are you that . . . see what you are going to do."

Andrade drew her arm gently towards him, raising one of his knees so that his thigh might form a platform on which to lay it.

"See!" said he suddenly and softly; and she bent her head obediently and watched him as he followed down along the blue courses of the veins on her white arm with his penknife. "See! So blue and full of life they are. Life! Life! Do you hear? The bounding, pulsing life that you are going to end, poor child, because the weight of your sin and treachery

is more grievous than you can bear. Life ! Life ! Happy, joyous, zestful life ; sunshine, play, youth, hope. Goodbye. Away, away. So easy to say goodbye, Vivian. One probe here, here in the bend, where the skin is white and soft with its dimple and tiny wrinkles—one prick, Vivian, and then I clasp this plaything in your hand and lift you ever so tenderly on the bed, to sleep your life away. Oh, so weary of life you are. So sorry for your sin, Vivian. Come.”

The priest took Vivian's other hand ever so gently, and clasping the fingers around the knife's haft, guided it firmly towards the bare white arm. I reckon an average man, had he been a spectator as I was, would probably have interfered and spoiled things at this juncture. I did not. Oh, yes. I am aware that some of my readers will, by this time, have begun to dislike me, and to think my general moral tone bad. This is as inevitable as that no two temperaments, no two brains, no two estimates of the world, its people, its ways and its meaning, can ever be alike. Let me tell you right here, I am not bad. Many a moral man has no ear for music, and many a musician has no morality to speak of ; and I opine that the one is as blameable as the other. I do not claim an acute moral perception. I was not built that way. After all, to the mass of mankind, morality means only the following of the instincts plumb up to the safety limit, and it means the same to me, though I may perhaps skirt the boundary

closer and be more venturesome than most. Truly, I have never found time, or felt inclined to try and manufacture a spurious moral sense. If it don't come natural it won't come at all, to be worth a bean. There is no answer to the man who, when asked to sing, says, "I ain't got a voice." We are sorry for him. That is all. I tell you straight, I ain't got the moral sense as it is called. It was not hanging anywhere around me when I was born, and I don't want it. I have met a few—very few—who really had the genuine article, and a wretched, rocky life it led them. I have met multitudes with that pinchbeck moral veneer which is only the craven cloak of the coward who, lacking the real thing, is scared into the sham through fear of the world, and I have despised them one and all.

No. I didn't interfere, though my feelings were immense. The shaded light, the sombre tapestry, the oaken doors, and the memory of the rugged twelve-foot walls and the old stone steps down which I had stolen; the priest kneeling there in his raven-black clothes, his powerful figure, though so still, seeming so abnormally quick, and his face frozen into rigidity by the intense purpose of the mind behind it; and the girl who had so lately laughed and cried and poured out her silly young heart so winningly, kneeling now in front of him with her curly hair and bare white arm, mute and enthralled into abject self-surrender—all

beast ; and yet, even as a brute, he still engrossed my attention wholly, and my eyes were riveted on that upraised hand, which only waited for an opening to strike. Thus the judge's fingers had closed round his wrist before I was aware that he had entered the room, and I only caught sight of him as my eyes followed the priest as he rose and struggled to free his wrist. The judge was still shoeless, and a pistol was in his other hand, but Andrade seized hold of that hand and heaved it up high above his head, and the judge heaved Andrade's hand with the knife in it equally high. So the two men stood glaring into each other's eyes, with hands and weapons high upraised, while Vivian lay motionless at their feet, and the Southern serving-maid, who had summoned the judge, crouched terrified in the doorway. I tell you, it was great.

There was little to choose between the two. They were both tall, broad, and abnormally powerful men, and though perhaps the judge was the larger boned and heavier man, the priest's comparative youth and great suppleness fully made up for what he might lack in these respects. I judged, as I looked into their eyes, that in grit and venomous downright hatred of each other they were equally matched. It occurred to me now that by emerging and taking one side or the other I could have settled the matter at once. But I didn't feel like emerging. Not much. The place where I found myself was good enough for me.

At first they moved but little, though sufficiently to show me their faces, and to inform me that, if their movement was slight, their efforts were tremendous. Each wanted to free his armed hand ; each strove to retain the armed hand of the other ; both kept their eyes steady and fixed as a pair of gamecocks, feinting, feeling, and straining for the slightest advantage that might be gained with safety. So they slowly circled round, silent save for their heavy breathing ; and I could see the veins in their foreheads and around their necks swelling almost to bursting with the efforts they were making ; while their hands, grasping the shining weapons, swayed to and fro above their heads. Soon the strain began to tell. Arms, even muscled as were theirs, cannot remain upheld, rigid, and at the highest tension indefinitely. They began to move quicker now, and first one pair of arms bowed and writhed and jerked, and then the other pair. Rapidly and furiously they dragged and wrenched now, forcing each other here, there, backward and forward, and panting like wild beasts ; and then once more those arms were upraised and almost still again, each man bearing his weight upon, and boring in upon the other. And now, slowly, very slowly, the judge began to wear the priest down. The latter's face was towards me now, and I could see this was so by the look of physical distress which distorted it, and by the nervous quivering of his upraised arms. Yes, the judge was the tougher. He

was hard as nails, and I knew it, and felt sorry for it, my sympathy being with the priest. He was winning, and knew it, and the priest knew it too, for he suddenly changed his tactics, and, dropping to his knees, bowed his body, and with a mighty swing swayed his opponent round and round with an impetus that would have dislodged a sheep-tick. It was a grand effort, but the judge, though taken by surprise, held on. I heard Andrade gasp now, and starting to his feet again he dragged the judge headlong and madly about the great room. I looked into his face as they raged by. It was horrible to look at, and I felt with a pang that this was his last great effort. I looked into the judge's face. It was drawn with distress, but his teeth were set firmly in his lip, and he meant to win. Short of exposing myself I would have done anything to save the priest. Round and round that room they wrestled, stumbling here, crashing there, never loosing their grips, but the priest ever weakening, the judge ever gaining; and then, in a moment of time, all was darkness, and the room resounded with the ring of glass as the lamp fell shattered to the floor. On they strove, heedless of light or darkness; but I stole from my hiding place now that all was dark, and made for them, guided by sound. I meant to save that priest. I found them by touch, kneeling together on the floor and striving face to face, and I reached for those upraised hands to get the pistol. I got it, and gripped it; but another hand,

coming from I knew not where, gripped it also and wrenched it from my grasp. I threw my arms desperately now around one of the gasping, striving men, I knew not which, but as I clasped his breast I felt the cold nozzle of the pistol pressing into it, and I withdrew my arms with a speed that threw me backwards. In time, thank God I was in time. A shot rang out now, so close that I instinctively threw myself down as a soldier ducks to a bullet, and one of the two, the priest or the judge—I knew not which—fell back on me, knocking the breath out of me with his dead weight. I did not stay to inquire which of the two it was. It was a minor matter to my own safety. With infinite difficulty I extricated myself from him and started to grope my way to the door. The other combatant had risen, and I bumped into him and kicked at him desperately and squealed as I did it, and then groped on to the door. I found it, how I know not, for I was nearly demented, and I fled along that passage back to my room. Again I visited that oak chest with my shin, but this time I did not sit down. Nothing short of total paralysis would have induced me to do so. The cord which had secured Box's handle to mine was hanging loose, but I did not care; indeed I was glad, in that it made my entrance easier! and I was in bed and simulating sleep to the best of my ability within five minutes. I should have been there within half the time had I not thought it wise to

start my head bleeding again, smear the corner of the mantel with the blood, and then stick a few hairs, which I pulled from my head for the purpose, in it. I could not hide the cut. My zeal was excessive. The judge did not happen along for an hour. He found me sleeping peacefully as an infant, and I took care to require considerable waking, and asked him sleepily whether it was time for my watch over Box.

"Box has skipped by the light of the moon," said the judge, "but that is a small matter. Listen to me, Jimmy."

He sat down on the edge of my bed, very wearily I thought, and told me truthfully the events of the night, neither concealing what he felt for Vivian, nor hiding the smallest item. It was the pretty Southern girl—Vivian's companion and maid-in-private—who had snatched the pistol from me and shot Andrade dead with it.

"I should have downed him anyway," said the judge, "but I was glad when I felt him go, for he had freed his knife and had pricked me some. The girl says she wrested the pistol from a third party in the dark, and I am sure some one was around, for he kicked me and squealed like a guinea-pig. Some one caught hold of that poor girl too, earlier in the evening, when she was going on guard, and hammered her senseless on the stone flags. She reckons it was the same party. We must find him, Jimmy."

"That's so," I said.

"How did you hurt your head that way, Jimmy?" asked the judge suddenly.

"Thought I heard a noise ; jumped out of bed, and knocked myself silly against the corner of the mantel there," I replied laughing. I enjoyed watching the judge examine the corner of that mantel ever so.

"Vivian is in my room," said the judge. "I will call her, and talk to her like a father." He did so.

CHAPTER XVII

"SIT down right there, little girl, and don't be scared. I'm going to talk considerable," said the judge kindly, pointing to an armchair by the bedside. Vivian sat down; the judge leaned heavily against the head-board of the bed and talked, while I lay and listened; and by and by the Southern girl crept in fearfully, and, crouching by the door, listened also. I reckon a more curious company has seldom assembled together at two o'clock in the morning. Vivian's arm was still bare and bloodstained, her maid's head was swollen as though she had been tilting against a windmill with it; my hair was all caked up with blood, and, to judge from the judge's back, which was towards me, he was the worst played out of the crowd. His beginning was abrupt, but his voice was tranquil.

"I am a fraud, Vivian. So is Jimmy here," he said. "So are you, little one, but unwillingly, and you don't like it. We do. That's the difference. See? Don't interrupt, but listen to me. A man who is absolutely

free from hypocrisy and false pretence is called sincere, ain't he ? Let me tell you he is an exceedingly objectionable bird when encountered, and is, happily, very rare. He is of two classes ; either rich enough to be able to afford sincerity—which means mighty rich—or poor, and so hopelessly unworldly and foolish as not to realise his own insensate, damning sincerity. Never, in either case, is he called sincere ; but in the first his sincerity becomes eccentricity, and, though it hurts others horribly, it is grinned at and borne by them ; and in the second it becomes impertinence, misanthropy, cussedness, and all the bad names that can possibly be applied to it, and its unfortunate possessor is universally and rightly execrated and persecuted. This is one of the great moral laws of all society, savage or civilised. Happily, I say, Vivian, the sincere man is a rarity, and the great majority of mankind have become sufficiently educated to grasp the fact that some point of compromise between humbug and sincerity is necessary to make daily life, whether of business or pleasure, successful, or even feasible. Are you listening carefully, little girl ? Do so. What I say is the fruit of a life of observation, and I ain't talking for nothing.

“As the planes of society vary, so also vary the exact point of balance to be aimed at, and the nicety and delicacy of adjustment necessary ; but, no matter what the plane, the men who approximately—I say approxi-

mately, for it never could be done exactly—strike this correct point of balance are those astute few who succeed in life far beyond their fellows. We all—I do not include the rich tyrants and poor pariahs of sincerity already alluded to—we all try our utmost, to the limit of our mental capacity, to hit this correct and desirable balance, and, curiously enough, each individual considers that he is doing so, just as every man on the face of the earth considers himself, in his own sphere, a gentleman; and we each have a standpoint on which we stand and look down complacently and pityingly on the manifest failures and absurd idiosyncrasies of our neighbours in the competition, quite unconscious of the fact that the point on which we are standing is our one blind-spot, self. Stir the fire, dear. I am cold.

“Yes, Vivian. All men are blends—blends of humbug and sincerity; neither have any two blends ever been alike; but have infinitely varied, as have the faces of all individuals since the world began. The majority of mankind, however, being mediocre and lacking in originality, are content to try and follow those moves already established by long experiment and usage as conventional; that is, broadly, they try to humbug to the full extent to which humbug has been tacitly legitimised by mankind, and to be sincere when it is safe and advantageous to be so; and it is wonderful to observe how hopelessly they flounder about even

within this limited scope of procedure ; neither do these ever attain to prominence. It is only the adventurous original few, my child, who, throwing aside the miserable bonds of conventionality and cant, are wholly free to aim with all the skill they possess at that blend of sincerity and humbug which means success in life. And—mark this, little one—if humbug is a sin, sincerity is a thousand times more so in the sight of your fellow man ; for, while the one is often grateful to him though he may affect to despise it, the other is never so, nor is there any affectation about the hatred and craving for your blood which it arouses in his breast. Yes. Jimmy and I are humbugs, little one.”

So the judge discoursed, ever so quietly and dreamily, stroking the girl's hand while she looked up into his benevolent face in the dim light. I listened, and liked it, and did not interrupt him, though it struck me that he was wandering some from the direct line of business, and I noted that the small hand of the clock kept creeping nearer III. What he said was so. No one who listened to him could think otherwise ; and it seemed to me that what he said was said with an ultimate purpose, though his voice was strangely weak and his manner a trifle wandering.

“ Yes,” said he, turning and good-humouredly poking through the blankets at my ribs, “ Jimmy here is a fraud, and I am a fraud, because it is thus we see the game of life played all around us. We try to play a

little less clumsily and a little more venturously, that is all. But we try to be true to our principles too, and true to each other ; for, to be a fraud is not necessarily to be a coward, or a traitor, or a skunk, and, our object in life being common, we are open and outspoken one with the other. Were he to deceive me I should deal with him as with any low-down common blackleg, and he knows it, and I also know the penalty should I deceive him." (The judge turned round and searched for my eyes with his own in the semi-darkness, and I did not like it.) (That priest who so nearly killed you and now lies dead himself was a bad kind of fraud, Vivian—one made bitter and ruthless and fanatical by something which all history tells us has always aroused the bitterest, most cruel and fiendish relentlessness in the hearts of men—that thing called religion, which still makes man hate man to the death for the love of God.) He came along to scoop in this property for religion's sake, but he has failed ; we came along to scoop it in for worldly profit, and we mean to win. See, little girl ? Some one else would freeze on to it if we didn't, and we reckon we shall appreciate it as well as any one. That's all. Seems to me you had better chip in cheerfully and go along with us, eh, Vivian ? A girl like you can't go fooling out alone in the world in search of the narrow path, and if you did I reckon it would lead you in the end to the wrong gate. You had best stay beside an old man who likes

you ever so, little one, and who will take care of you and exact no kissings of crucifixes, but only a promise to be loyal and faithful. Will you promise me, Vivian ? This way. Look me in the eyes and say, I promise to obey and be true and loyal to you so long as you are so to me, and are never a coward, or mean, or unnecessarily cruel, or unmanly."

The judge's voice had sunk almost to a whisper—a very soft whisper that was plumb full of feeling, and made one fancy that his eyes must be all of a swim. I had never heard him speak so, but I knew he meant and believed what he said—right down to bed rock he meant and believed it ; and it seemed as though the sound of his own soft words had carried him along with them ways into his sentimental chivalrous phase and left him weakly wallowing in it. Vivian knelt and repeated those words at his knee. I believe any girl would have done it had he talked to her in that voice ; but I was sick of his prayer-meeting, unbusiness-like methods, and jerked in some words, nor did he protest, which surprised me.

"How about that girl with the swollen head ?" I asked abruptly, pointing to the girl crouching miserably in the doorway. "I reckon she will have to hang for the common good."

My remark sounded abrupt and brutal. I meant it to do so, knowing women's ways ; and I reckoned on those two girls rushing together and clasping and paw-

ing and crying all over each other when they heard it. They did so, and I took the opportunity to look at the judge. He had fainted up against the bed-head, and his shirt was red where the priest had jabbed in his knife. I thought as much, and was glad of it. We had had enough of his baby-talk, and I meant business, and saw the chance of asserting my authority.

"Judge," I said, taking his inert hand and wringing it heartily, "you have done well and bravely, while I have been fooling away my time in sleep. Rest yourself. I will take a hold for awhile now." Then, turning to Vivian, I shouted, "Quit that boo-ooing, Vivian, and come here."

She came, but like a dog approaching a hedgehog for the second time, and it riled me to see her coming so.

"Why do you come that way? I don't bite," I shouted.

"I am afraid of you and of your face," she replied simply.

I laughed, and the laugh tasted bitter in my mouth. I liked that girl, and the way she sidled towards the judge and tried to feel for his hand made me mad, and I took up my pillow and, throwing it at the dimly burning lamp, knocked it off the table where it stood. This scared the girl, and I seized her hand and held it tight while I addressed the unconscious judge in the darkness.

"You for effect, judge, I for detail. That is the only way to run this show, and you know it. You ain't worth a bean for detail, you old fossil. Don't get mad now, but just do as I tell you, and sail in for effect when the time comes for all you are worth, and be content to fool around with and pet pretty girls in your spare time. You are great, judge, and I admire you ever so ; but we didn't come over here to father pretty orphans. We came to make a scoop, and you are pledged to it, and dare not contradict me." I paused, but naturally the judge did not contradict me. It tickled me to talk to him so. "I tell you, judge," I said, raising my voice, "I mean to run things my own way, and when the wings of your genius start in to flap you out of the direct line of business, Jimmy will pull you straight every time, and don't you forget it ! I have listened to you silently, and have agreed by my silence to protect Vivian here and to be kind to her so long as she is sensible." (I squeezed Vivian's hand hard here.) "Now you listen to me. Vivian's guardian committed suicide because she confessed his fraud to us. Do you freeze on to that ? Good. Vivian will show us his room right now, and we will carry him there and lay him on his bed with the pistol in his hand. Vivian will write a full confession to-morrow morning, and will sign it, and you will add an affidavit and I will add another. She will say in her confession that we have been very kind to her, and are going to provide

for her out of the estate with the consent of our Ward, who, she now knows, is the rightful owner. The household will find the priest dead in the morning, and they will tell Vivian of it, and she will summon them together and confess her sex and everything else to them also ; and tell them that we, out of pure goodness of heart, have consented that they shall stay on for a while if they wish. Vivian's confession will appear in every newspaper in England within twenty-four hours—I will see to that ; and there will be a coroner's inquest, at which she will give evidence, a report of which will also appear in the newspapers. There will be a grand fuss and hubbub, and every male and female who is in any way connected with the Mulready family will want to know all about it ; and the lawyers too ; and they shall all be summoned here for a grand pow-wow, and shall bury poor Charles in state ; and Vivian will seize the opportunity of confessing to them also, and we will help write the confession. It has been a grand night's work, judge, and now the priest is gone it seems to me we are solid, soon as I find Tommy tomorrow. As for you," I said, turning to the Southern maid, "you will either do as you are bid, or be hanged. It is immaterial. How does that strike you for high, judge ?"

The judge did not answer, and, letting on to feel him over, I laughed and said he was sleeping, and that we would let the poor old man rest so, while we put things

ship-shape. Then I said "Hush!" and sent Vivian outside to take off her shoes and those of her maid while I dressed, and she went ever so quietly for fear of waking him. But I woke him when she was gone all the same, and, having lit a candle, bound up his wound with strips of bed-sheet. It was a bad wound, and he had bled enough to make him glad to lie quiet when I had dragged him down on the bed. In fact he was too bad to move any, and I was mighty glad of it. It was four o'clock before I got to bed. I took considerable trouble over the priest, and he looked an ideal suicide before I left him. I had a piece of luck too, for my door key fitted his door lock, so I left his key clasped in his left hand and locked the door from the outside with mine, so that the servants might burst the door open and find the key on the inside. Then, after sending Vivian to bed in her own room, I turned into the judge's bed to try and have a sleep. But I didn't sleep, for the priest's dead face stayed with me, and I felt that in him I had lost the friend and ally who would have been after my own heart; and I was sorry, ever so sorry, and the vista of the future seemed desolate and doubtful.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE judge said next morning that things had hummed so on the previous night he felt dizzy yet, and reckoned he would take a day off in bed. He took a week, and we had to have a doctor from London to see to that wound of his. Rheumatism was what he called it. He amused himself mostly with Vivian and by talking to Clement, the parson, for whom he sent the first day. Clement spent most of his time at the castle after that, and came to think that there was no man living to be compared with the judge. He was a good, simple man was Clement, and those two hatched some fine schemes between them. I left it to the judge to fix the details, but I agreed that Wearham should have a hospital, and new schools, and a reading-room with a library attachment, and I sympathised very strongly when the judge said there should be no deserving poor in the village. It was beautiful to hear him talk, and the princely augmentation of Clement's living which he proposed, and the delicate way in which he did it brought tears to the parson's

eyes. Yes, those two became confidential brothers, and I was glad to see it. Things had hummed. That's a fact. And they went on humming as far as I was concerned.

The household never questioned Andrade's suicide. The locked door, and the key found clasped in his hand when the door had been burst open, settled that matter conclusively. There was some commotion, but little sorrow, and considerable covert rejoicing—for their fear of the priest seemed to have been extreme.

The deputy priest, who had scared me so in the chapel on the night previous, threatened to be awkward, but I got him alone in the chapel and talked to him, and he soon quit. I said I thought he had best move out right away—in half an hour if he liked, though five minutes would suit me better. He didn't agree to that, so I put it to him that this was not a temporal matter, but one of my soul's most inward and sacred conviction. His face hurt me some, I said, but that was not where the trouble lay. It was his way-upness of religious principle that was grating on my soul like a file on a saw. I was low, I said—ways down same as the Wearham parson, while he, as I understood it, was about as high as they made them. I kicked down a couple of his painted images to prove where the difference lay, and the effect of the simple action was greater and more satisfactory than I expected, for he quit that castle within half an hour, speechless and

crazy to leave my environment ; and, as he wasted a full minute hanging around to see me struck dead, his despatch did him credit. I was not struck dead.

I sent for the little Spanish attorney next, and hustled him off the premises ; and as soon as I had got through with him, Brill came to me. He came, as was his wont, like a penitent sinner coming to confession with a scourging to follow, and he looked so mean and measly crawling around there among those images that I stirred him up with my foot, just to show my appreciation of his methods. He did not seem to mind, so I did it again. I was riled with Box, that was the truth of it, and Brill coming in handy I abused him for his master. "You can follow him," I cried angrily, "follow him, and knock your cast-iron head against his." But Brill made a demonstration now. He said he did not want to go, but wished to stay along with me. He liked me ever so, he said, and then he cried some, after which he indulged in some personal reminiscence. We had saved him from starvation on the Liverpool docks, he said, and I replied I was mighty sorry to hear it. That made Brill look almost happy, but he lapsed into pathos again mighty quickly, and told me abjectly about his life. He had made a mistake in his life, he whined, in fact he was a convict, an escaped convict, and would do anything in the world for me if I would let him stay with me, and hide with me, and slave for me. Brill's story

was a long one, and his grief became very irritating and noisy before he was through with it, so that I became vexed; but when he said he wanted to become an honest man I became grave, and felt bound to keep him—indeed it had already occurred to me that he might be very useful, while he was certainly harmless; and I reckoned that he had his good points, though the cream of his intellect about equalled that of an intelligent dog, and an infusion of the remainder into the brain of an imbecile would have sent him raving mad. He was never inconveniently evident, though he was generally around when wanted, and he could brush clothes and shave finely. I rather fancied being shaved and dressed. Ludicrous he might be, but one look into his wooden face and turtle eyes was enough to convince any one of his harmlessness. Even the judge acknowledged this, and had long ago nicknamed him “?” So I turned on him fiercely, saying—

“Muzzle yourself, Brill, and attend to me. I will keep you—stop that snivelling right now. Not that I want you—mind that—but because it is my duty as a Low Churchman to help you to be a better man. See? I ain’t going to pay you, Brill—convicts don’t get paid; and the first time I catch you trying to think, or reckoning your soul your own, I will hand you kerslap over to the police. See?”

Brill was pleased at that, and went off smiling like

an intoxicated bridegroom. He would have stayed to be jumped on, had I asked him ; and I wish I had asked him. I wish I had jumped on him right there until he could not tell the difference between his face and his feet. There was not a great deal of difference anyway. I shall not mention him again for some time, because I have not time or space to do it in ; but after that he was there and with me all the time, and I never caught him breaking my rules, though I piled enough temper and abuse on that man to make him break his neck or smother himself. No matter what went wrong, Brill was to blame ; and whenever the judge riled me or bossed me—which he very often did—I said what I dared to him, and Brill got the balance. Where I went, Brill followed, taking what kicks I gave him like a well-e^ducated cur, and never hearing anything he should not hear, or seeing anything he should not see. Not that I took him on appearances only, for I tested him by a hundred little surprises and sudden questionings ; but he was always the same unique, wooden-headed animal, and as time went on I came to doubt whether he had the faculty for taking an interest in anything apart from my commands.

The next man who came to me was——

* * * * *

See those stars ? My publisher put those in instead of fifty pages or so of manuscript dealing with my

doings during that week, and with the hundred and one documents I signed and the many legal processes I went through. Those pages showed me up finely as a lawyer ; but he says that a man don't sit down to write for the purpose of talking about himself and slinging ink around, but to interest the public. This may be so, though it seems to me that nine-tenths of the autobiographies which clog the book market nowadays ought never to have been written if it is so. Never mind. I have quit trying to boss publishers. Emperors, presidents, niggers, and mules may be bossed at times, but publishers are oracles, and come out on top always.

Vivian behaved well during that week. She confessed to the assembled household while I stood by watching her blushing, bashful face, and liking it ever so. But I did not interfere with her. Truth comes in grandly sometimes, and it was all she had to tell, and she told it with an ingenuousness that was winning and convincing. Let me tell you this. When a child speaks truth or writes it (a mighty rare occurrence, mind you), it seems to do so a thousand times more truthfully than can a grown-up person. The grammar may be faulty and the expression crude, but there is a downright directness about a kid's mode of truth-telling that compels sympathy and conviction every time. I have realised this dozens of times in the court-house, and I did so more than ever while I listened to Vivian ;

nor did I alter a single word of the confession which she wrote afterwards at my bidding, though the judge and I witnessed it.

When things had quieted down somewhat I started down to the village to find Tommy. I never doubted my ability to do this speedily, and as I walked through the park and surveyed the Mulready estates stretching far away out of sight my step was springy, and I looked upon that gilt-edged property as my own. I didn't find Tommy. I was systematic enough. Making the Mulready Arms my starting point, I circled around from there until I had visited every house, cottage, and hovel in Wearham and within half a mile of it. Naturally I did not state my purpose, but let on that I was anxious to become acquainted with them all. I said every one was equal in the place I came from (a fallacy, by the way), and I wanted to show that I was not high-toned, but willing to be their friend in the true sense. I found those villagers a sour-visaged, taciturn, unresponsive lot from start to finish, and I did not find Tommy.

Charles's funeral took place. It was my duty as executor to bury him, and I did it well. It was a fine spectacle, and the whole village and an army of Mulready relations and connections came to it, but there was no enthusiasm. Those villagers gathered in groups, and whispered together and acted so that there was no getting any life or appreciation of things out of

them. I tried to be friendly, I tried to be genial, but I might just as well have been friendly and genial to a bed of oysters. The judge was still in bed ; Vivian, after her confession, was too shy to be present, and Tommy naturally was not there, nor was Box. I was obliged to change Tommy's sick headache into scarlet-fever, and to send Box to London on business for the peace of mind of the company in general. No ; I did not enjoy that funeral. There was something in the atmosphere I did not like at all.

The coroner's inquest came next. He and his jury sampled our whisky ; and finding it and the evidence satisfactory, poor Andrade was dumped into unconsecrated ground at the parson's instigation. There was no hitch about that inquest, and the result gave general satisfaction. But I searched for Tommy in vain, and, while I searched, the papers rang with Vivian's confession and with Tommy's name, and the stress of inquiry about him was enough to raise him from the dead ; but he never showed up, and the judge and I were compelled to fool away our brains on all sorts of petty devices. We asked the parson to pray for his recovery from scarlet-fever in church, and he did it. We let on that the doctor came from London to attend him, and not the judge. We made Estela, Vivian's maid, into a nurse, and kept the wretched woman in an isolated room and ever so quiet ; and we made up stacks of medicine bottles so that we

might leave them lying around with his name on them.

I happened on a clue at last. It was this way. Having searched in vain throughout the village and the half-mile radius, I took to wandering at hazard further afield, and on the tenth day I came upon a farmhouse lying hidden among some trees a mile from the village. I did not gain access to the house, because its owner, one Angus Rudd, stopped me at the gate. Angus Rudd was rough in his ways and outspoken. Further, he was six feet in height and had the frame of a gladiator ; he also had a pitchfork in his hand. I approached his gate and introduced myself, but he knew me already.

"You come," shouted Angus, "to seek the lad you tried to murder, you——" (I forget the word, but it was of North-country strain and force.) "He was carried here. Yah ! I know his story, and I know yours. There was truth in the young woman's eyes. Clear out, now."

The above is only the drainlet of sober sense which I managed to extract from the flood of Angus Rudd's address, and then I cleared out. When an uncouth yokel of Samsonian build loses his temper, roars like a bull and waves a pitchfork, it is better to depart from him. I did not like Angus Rudd or his tone anyway.

I hastened home to the judge with my clue, and met

Clement, the parson, coming from the castle. I had left the judge lazying around with Vivian—indeed we had parted angrily because of it ; but when I regained the castle he was alone and waiting for me, and I saw by the way in which his mouth was drawn in a straight line across his face that something ailed him. His manner was odd too, and he led me to the billiard-room, and locked the door when we had got inside, a thing I had never known him do before.

“Sit down, Jimmy, sit down and rest yourself,” he said.

I did so, and he sat down beside me and started in to fill his pipe. He was feeling. So was I, for that matter, but I could fill my pipe and handle it with judgment. He could not. I watched his fingers unconsciously grip that pipe with a grip that would have bent a dollar, and when the amber snapped in half I lit mine and handed it to him. When he had taken a few draws he opened up.

“Jimmy,” he said, “I always reckoned a lynx would appear stone-blind beside you, but I never knew what those double horse-power, gimlet eyes of yours could probe before to-day.”

He smiled, and his voice was sweet ; but I have seen a strong man smile with a knife sticking through him, and have heard sweet words from a mouth plumb full of gall. His remark had not the ring of a compliment anyway, and I did not thank him for it.

"What ails you, judge?" I asked.

"I'm licked where to class you, Jimmy. That's what," he answered. "I always put Box way down among the deadbeats, but he found Tommy in one day. The parson seemed to me too innocent and simple for this world, but he has heard all about it in ten days. I am suffering so because I can't get low enough to class you, Jimmy."

His words and tone stung me cruelly, but I said—

"Go on, judge. You ain't hurting me any."

"Have you found Tommy?" he asked.

"No," I answered bitterly; "but I have worn down my shoes to the uppers in trying to, while you have lazed around and smoked and fooled with that girl Vivian. I have found a clue, judge."

"A clue!"

He laughed. I would sooner have seen him cry than laugh that way; and then he pulled a letter from his pocket and gave it to me. It bore the London postmark, and was from Box.

"DEAR JUDGE," it ran, "I am about to sail for a remote corner of the earth. Take my advice and do likewise. I believe there is some good about you somewhere if one could only get at it, and that is why I write to you.

"I found Tommy that morning. He was lying at Angus Rudd's farm with a broken head. If you don't

believe me, send that little skunk Jimmy to inquire. Angus will convince him, and thrash him too, I hope, as he did me. I left Angus on the run. I was coming to tell you, but I ran into Vine Duncan instead. She was coming to the castle. Shall I tell you how she looked or what she said? No; but I am going to try to be a better man, judge. Her eyes and face haunt me, judge. They would haunt you too. I tell you they burn, and there is no room in them for hope, or pity, or womanliness; for all these things have died out into one great light of revenge which cries aloud to kill. I took her to Angus Rudd's farm, judge, and he believed her story, and suffered her to take Tommy away, though she was moneyless and in rags. I came to the castle, as you know, to sneak the will, but I was fooled by the attested copy.

"You would shoot me on sight, judge. I know that, but I will not wrong that woman more. I have not gained anything, and I stink in her nostrils more than would an average polecat. But I'll risk being your target all the same.

"Get, judge. Take my advice and get. She will soon have all the money and friends she wants, and then she will down you sure, nor will you find her until she does it. Wring Jimmy's neck before you go. He deserves it, and ain't playing square by you. I know it.

"That was not a dream of mine at Lodo. Vine and

Bates did try to revivify Charles Mulready, but failed. She tied her cross to his forehead.

“Box.”

“What he says about Angus Rudd is so,” remarked the judge calmly, “for Angus went to Clement and told him all about it, and Clement, like a sensible and honourable gentleman, came to me. I am glad he came to me.”

“Well?” I could say no more.

“He came to me bewildered as a horse among bees and full of Angus Rudd’s story, which is largely your friend Vine’s story. What did it mean? Was not Tommy lying upstairs with the scarlet-fever? Who was this woman? and had Angus Rudd, his churchwarden, gone mad? I had a cruel time, Jimmy, and then I pulled out Box’s letter, the letter you hold in your hand, Jimmy, and read it to Clement.”

“What!” I shouted.

“Quite so,” said the judge, “read it this way:—

“MY VERY DEAR JUDGE,—You and worthy James have no doubt been awaiting some explanation from me of my hasty departure for London. As you will remember, I went, at your request, in search of that misguided youth, who was the servant of our afflicted ward Tommy. I succeeded in tracing him first to a pot-house where he had become intoxicated; then to a stone wall against which he had broken his head,

and I was on my way up to the house of one Angus Rudd, whither I ascertained he had been carried, when I encountered Vine Duncan, the unfortunate lady who became demented when poor Charles Mulready was executed. She was still mad, lamentably and dangerously mad, and attacked me furiously both with tongue and nails, to the considerable danger of my life, insisting that I should immediately deliver her dead lover's son to her. I said I would do so, and I took her to Angus Rudd's farm, and she told her crazy and pathetic story to him—the same mad story that caused her to be confined as a lunatic at Lodo—and he believed her, and was induced to deliver up the besotted, broken-headed servant lad Abe to her. Perhaps my ruse was cruel, but I did all for her sake and to avoid scandal; and it pacified her so that she took the youth away, and suffered me to accompany her to London. She is now safely lodged in a lunatic asylum, and is being treated with all the kindness possible. It is better so, believe me. You have been too kind, too tender to her throughout, and I am glad I have had an opportunity of putting in force my sterner methods. But it has harrowed me. The simple conviction with which she tells her story, and the pathos of it, are alike heartrending. Do not tell dear James; or, if you do so, break it with exceeding tenderness. He loved her once.

“GEORGE BOX.”

"I rang the bell for Estela when I had read Box's letter, Jimmy," continued the judge quite gravely, but with a twitch about the corners of his firm lips; "and when she came I asked her how Master Tommy was? She knew her lesson, and answered satisfactorily that he was very ill indeed, and calling ever so for me to come to him."

"And did you go?" I asked.

"Not at once. I allowed that Box had been hasty, but pointed out how he had probably saved a woman from committing crime. I said the insane desire for revenge might have carried her to any length; and he came to agree with me. We talked considerably after that about the miserable wickedness of the revengeful spirit in general, and I managed to coax him into the pulpit for a while. He spoke ever so nicely, saying that one should always take life's trials with a tranquil spirit, and turn the other cheek every time; and I agreed that what he said was so, and said I wished that my acquaintances would make a note of it. He shook my hand then. What is life? What is earthly revenge? he asked; and then, pulling a feather from the sofa cushion, he blew it away and smiled with his eyes looking far away—ways beyond the Golden Gates. We talked about the Romanists next, and in five minutes he had them all roasting finely and eternally, while I piled the fuel on for all I knew. I had to remind him to pray for Tommy on Sunday before he

went away. I am glad we started in low, Jimmy. Great Scott, how my side hurts."

The judge lay back for a while, and his face twitched some; and then he went on—

"You must go to London, Jimmy, and try to be more spry there than you have been here. And you don't take Brill. Hear that? I believe that crawling beast has affected your brain. You must find that boy and bring him back, by force if need be, and you must down Vine Duncan. Play fair, Jimmy; and no hitting from behind, or cowardice, or greasers' tricks. She is a woman, Jimmy; remember that. I can't come; I wish I could. But, Jimmy" (he sat up with an effort and held out his hand)," I trust you, and will join you when I can."

There was something in his eyes that made me turn my head away, but I wrung his hand.

"How about funds?" I asked. "You have won over that little shrimp Lister with that tongue of yours, judge, but funds are scarce still."

"The picture gallery—the picture gallery!" said the judge. "That little Rembrandt will carry you through until the will is proved. It will be proved within a week. Lister has promised it at ten thousand pounds a promise. Probate first, ten thousand pounds afterwards. See? Get a move on you, Jimmy."

I took the Rembrandt. I also took the judge's diamond ring, which happened to be lying on his

dressing-table, and then I began to pack. All went well for a time, and then I missed something; nor could I find it, though I searched high and low.

"Jimmy, Jimmy!" shouted the judge from below, "the carriage has been waiting ten minutes, and you will miss the train."

I ran down the stairs, gripsack in hand, and I felt that my face was white with apprehension. The judge was in the hall waiting for me; and Vivian, in her riding clothes and looking pretty as a picture, was clinging fondly to his arm.

"I know what has delayed you, Jimmy," said the judge gravely. "You have been looking for something—for this." He took a tiny case out of his vest pocket and held it at arm's length. "You see, Jimmy," he continued, "I have found out your vice; and, see here, Jimmy, this is how I crush it." He threw the case to the floor and turned his heel on it, and then he held out his hand to me.

"Come, Jimmy," he cried, "shake my hand and thank me, and go through the balance of your life a man, and not half a man and half a drug. Either that, or say goodbye to me for all time."

There was a smile on his face—and his was a wonderful smile. I took his hand, and wished with all my heart that my touch might kill him. But it didn't, and he clapped me on the back in his rough, hearty way, telling me I should thank him some day.

"I understand everything now," he said ; and then, taking me by the shoulders, he looked into my eyes, saying : "I could never have trusted you with that infernal morphia, Jimmy, but I shall remember that hand-shake. Few men would have given their hands that way, and I take that hand-shake as a promise, a manly promise, Jimmy, and I thank you for it, and admire you for it ever so. Goodbye."

The judge's eyes were bright, and there was a glisten in them. He was feeling again, and I left him and Vivian together. She was still clinging to his arm.

CHAPTER XIX

ONE never knew where one had the judge, and that was what riled me so. I don't think he ever quite knew himself where he was, or how he would be feeling next moment, for, though he was a man of genius and principle, his character was so random and complex as to make his principles little better than impulses, and there was about as much restfulness of purpose about him as about a weather-cock. I was glad to get away from him, and felt once more a responsible party as I sat through the night in that wearisome train. Day was dawning when I reached King's Cross station. I knew nothing of London except that it was considerably larger than Lodo ; but I asked no information. A smart man never does. He goes and finds out things for himself. Britishers do, mind you. Even in Lodo I have heard Britishers ask strings of questions, any one of which was a proof of ignorance, stupidity, and insularity. Asking stupid questions is the stamp of

a Britisher in my country. A man who is real smart is never ignorant of anything worth knowing. And so, having consigned my baggage to a heavy-eyed clerk, I stepped out into London as though it had been my playground from birth. Haze, indicative of heat to come later, was over everything when I reached the open and gazed around me. So dense was it that the Midland Hotel, directly in front of me, was nothing but a vast shadowy outline, whether of the Crystal Palace, or of St. Paul's Cathedral, or what, I had no notion; but I went for it because it looked immense, and was glad, when I gained its front entrance, to find it an hotel. I had no use for palaces or cathedrals just then, being tired out and hungry. However, I was not destined to enter. The rattling of a cab was what caused me to pause and turn my head, and then I ran down those steps and after the cab to the very best of my ability. My run was a short one, ending at the St. Pancras station; but it was long enough to enable me to note that all the blinds of the vehicle were pulled down, and to identify the piece of baggage that had attracted me so powerfully. There was no mistaking that bright yellow gun-case which Box had bought at Liverpool, and it was still bright and new-looking as ever, even to the large-lettered inscription on the lid of its owner's name and title. Now I meant to kill Box, and yet I could not for the life of me help

smiling at him and his ostrich-like methods as I watched from behind a pile of trunks. He did not get out when the cab stopped—not much. He waited until the driver came to him, and then sent the driver for a porter, and then sent the porter to take his ticket—a first-class to Liverpool. The porter did so, and returned for further instructions. Old Box did not mean to move yet awhile. I heard him say that he was very ill, and ask whether the train was in the station; and when the porter had answered in the affirmative he was sent off again to secure and prepare an empty compartment. Poor old Box! He had timed his departure for a far corner of the earth just half an hour too late. Whether he had a presentiment that death was hovering about him I cannot tell, but when at last he issued from the cab, all swathed up in his ulster and with a shawl round his head, his fear was evident and extreme. He was half led, half carried to his empty compartment, and I watched the manoeuvre with interest. He was not really sick; I knew that. Sickness was but his clumsy ruse for concealment; but he suffered acutely all the same as he crossed the platform—suffered through abject fear of detection.

I asked the porter at what time the train started, and learnt that fifteen minutes still remained. I had matured my plan by this time, and, leaving the station quickly, I made my way to the side entrance of the

hotel opposite. Box's porter was locking his door, and Box was nervously pulling down all the blinds as I left. My mind was quite made up to kill him, for he had broken the solemn agreement made in Levinsky's private dining-room at Lodo, and the penalty agreed upon had been death ; neither had I any feeling of compunction ; and I knew the judge would approve. Had I been still in Lodo, I might have picked a quarrel with him then and there, and shot him down, but in England such a course, though just, would have caused trouble, and he was not worth trouble. So I entered the hotel smoking-room instead, and, taking a blank sheet of paper, wrote :—

“ I, John Sprigg, of San Francisco, U.S., being sane and in my right mind, do solemnly declare that I am about to shoot myself, being tired of life and haunted with remorse. I shall do so in a first-class compartment of the train leaving St. Pancras at 7.45 a.m.

“ JOHN SPRIGG.”

This simple task done, I returned to the station and took a first-class ticket to Liverpool. Five minutes still remained to me, and I spent a fraction of one of them in taking a long suck at my flask behind a station pillar. It was necessary ; for in the little time that remained I must run my great risk. I wanted a railway carriage door-key ; indeed, the

success of my plan depended on my possessing one, and they are not readily acquired on the spur of the moment; nor must I ask for one, or bribe for one, because it was essential that no one should connect me and railway carriage door-keys together in any way whatsoever. Now I had seen Box's porter use his key and replace it in his vest pocket, and I meant to have that key. So I beckoned him to me, and told him to find me a first-class compartment. As a matter of fact, I found the compartment immediately adjoining Box's, but the porter thought he did. As I entered, I looked up at the ceiling and asked why the light was burning.

"To light you through the tunnels," he answered. I knew that.

"How many tunnels?" I asked.

"Two—a short 'un and a long 'un." I did not know that.

"Which comes first?"

"The long 'un; and they both comes before Leicester."

"Where do we stop first?"

"Leicester."

This was all I wanted to know, and, having looked at my watch, I sent him off on the run to get me a cup of tea. One minute more and the train would start. I did not want the tea, but I wanted him to carry it. He was a slow, lumbering fellow, but my

tip had been a handsome one, and he shuffled off with all the haste that was in him. I awaited his return, grasping the unsneaked door with one hand and my umbrella with the other. Box's blinds had been down all the time, and I could not be seen save from immediately in front, where, as it happened, no one was. The guard had his whistle to his lips before that miserable porter appeared far down the platform with a tea-tray in his hands, and I cursed them both. I braced myself now and waited, and while I waited the whistle blew and the porter's shuffling step approached. The train had actually begun to move before my time came, and then I dashed out of the carriage in frantic haste with my umbrella point foremost. I had timed it well. The umbrella point caught him in the eye, and the hot tea caught him pretty nearly all over. I had that key out of his pocket and was back in my compartment before the crockery was done clattering on the stone flags. I apologised to that porter as the train glided away. I said I had forgotten something, but that it did not matter now, and that I was real sorry for my clumsiness. He did not seem to take much stock in what I said, and the last I saw of him he was rocking himself to and fro on the platform. I was truly sorry for him.

As the train steamed by the guard I gave him half a crown and asked him to lock my door. He

ran along and did so. "They are all locked on the other side," he said. I knew that.

When the train had acquired some speed I unlocked the door on the down-line side, after which I sat by the window watching and resting. I thought too, but my thoughts were quite tranquil, and I felt little excitement and no fear, knowing I could now do what I had set myself to do without risk or danger to myself, and that, in doing it, I was acting loyally to the judge and to our solemn bargain. I had no particular personal desire to kill Box, for he seemed to me not worth any trouble, and I was very weary, and dizzy through hunger; but it never entered my head to let him go free. He must pay the forfeit; and, if there were anything in that bag of his, so much the better.

So I sat with my eyes patiently fixed ahead, watching until the dark arch of the first tunnel should loom up, and I shall never forget the effort it cost me to keep my eyes open. I was out of the carriage and crouching on the footboard with the door closed behind me almost before the tunnel was entered. This was no feat to me, who had spent two years of my youth as a news agent on the cars at home. Not wishing to be brained, I naturally chose to execute my exit on the side of the train which was away from the tunnel wall. It was a very little matter now to seize the handle of the door

adjoining, unlock it, enter it, and close it behind me.

I am not going to dwell on the episode, or on Box's face when he saw me. He may have taken me for the devil. Very likely. Anyway, I have not got rid of his face yet, and talking about it will not help me any. He did not move much from his corner, but the cigarette which he was smoking dropped on to his knee, and he suffered it to burn there while he huddled back as though he hoped that the corner might close round him and hide him; indeed, he could not do much else, the muzzle of my pistol being by this time mighty close to his head. He did no talking or shouting either. I reckon my eyes and the pistol must have stopped that. I did what was right and fair, and I did it quick. That is all. One thing I let him know, and it was that I was running no risk myself; for I pulled out the written declaration of John Sprigg and held it before his eyes so that he might read it, even giving him time to digest the fact that he was about to die in John Sprigg's name. And I told him—I had to shout it, for the noise was great—that my name was George Box for the present. I did not like it, I said, but I meant to stick to it for a while so that I might rake in George Box's baggage and take it back to London with me. John Sprigg had no baggage, I said; but then he did not need it for the journey he was going.

And then—never mind. No one knows what happened then ; certainly he did not, for he had gone into a sort of fascinated state long before ; but when the train emerged from the tunnel John Sprigg was lying very still on the floor with my pistol grasped in his hand and his declaration of intention sticking from his vest pocket, and I was sitting by the window watching steadily for the short tunnel, while I nursed George Box's satchel and umbrella on my knee. The train slowed down and stopped once before the second tunnel was reached, and I did not enjoy that at all ; but I regained my original compartment in the end safely, and hurled the door-key, which had now done its work, out of the window and far away into a copse as the train sped by it. My umbrella followed the key, because it had my name on it. Box's was a better one, anyway. I sat down, and, taking George Box's keys from my pocket, opened George Box's satchel, meaning to go through it thoroughly. But I did not. One thing only I took from it, and that lay on the very top, and it was Vine's photograph—a beautiful speaking likeness of Vine. I shoved the satchel on one side, and looked at and revelled in that picture until my head grew light, and I fell into a state which was no doubt due, in part at least, to much fasting, great weariness, and reaction. Strange and pleasant it was, and during it I lived my old Lodo days over again, and felt almost as I used to

feel when under the spell of her voice and of her presence. Not that the present faded from my mind, for it did not. My eyes were still fixed ahead, looking for Leicester now, but my watch became more or less mechanical, and I lapsed into a sort of dual consciousness, as it were—half of the present, half of the past.

I had a heart in those old days—a heart that could yearn and feel. Laugh, but it is true; and it started in to beat now almost as it used to then. I tell you I loved that woman in those days gone by, and she liked me; and now, in my excessive lassitude and weariness, she came back to me so that intervening time seemed blotted out, and all things seemed delightfully feasible and possible. Why should she not come to me at last? There seemed to be no reason why she should not, and I got to building dreamy schemes, and to yearning ever so about it, even as I had yearned before my heart died that night on the Lodo cliffs. My schemes were those of a traitor too—a traitor to the judge and to all my aims and pledges—but that was as nothing. Curious indeed was the mixture of the real and the imaginary in my mind; and curious, too, how all things and facts that were advantageous and bright came always uppermost. Those priceless pictures at the bottom of my trunk and the judge's diamond ring were very prominent. They were the

means of riches—those riches which were to take Vine and me together far away from the past and present into a happier and higher future. Wonderfully satisfying was my state of mind ; and it came to me pleasantly—almost with a thrill of wonder too—that I used in those old Lodo days to be capable of good thoughts—yes, noble thoughts and aspirations when I thought of Vine, and I felt—God knows that I felt it—that some such feeling was latent in me yet, and ready to be touched into activity once again by her touch, but which I hated and shrank from apart from her.

I do not know how long my mind played tricks with me thus, hatching a hundred scenes, all vivid, real, and natural, in which Vine and I were together, and in which goodness was good, and lofty aims were pleasurable because of it ; but I was lying at full length on the seat asleep when the train reached Leicester, and a ticket examiner had considerable difficulty in waking me up. He was much excited, and angry because my door was locked. He said that guards had no right to lock doors that way ; but the guard happened up just then and told him to mind his business, which he proceeded to do. I roused up now, showed my ticket, and seeing an excited cluster of officials around the door of the adjoining compartment, asked what was the matter. They told me that a man named John Sprigg had shot himself through the head, and asked

me if I had heard the report of the shot. Naturally I had not, having been asleep, but the news shocked me greatly. After this I was asked innumerable questions by various policemen, but they learnt little from me save expressions of horror at the deed, for I had been asleep, and my door had been locked, as had the suicide's. I was anxious to do all I could for them, and gave them my name, George Box, British Vice-Consul of Lodo, California, to which place I said I was on my way. There was some talk about detaining me as a witness ; but as I had no evidence, owing to my unfortunate sleep, and assured them that I had never heard of a John Sprigg before that day—which was a strictly true statement—they let me alone. They carried poor misguided John Sprigg away, and duly sat on him and interred him. I read about it afterwards under the heading of "The Suicide Epidemic." They found no baggage belonging to him, and, save for his money and jewellery, they found nothing of interest in his pockets, neither was his linen marked. I knew that. It was some he had bought on his arrival at Liverpool. Poor John Sprigg. His life was a short one, and his death aroused little interest, and only one comment from one of the enlightened men who sat on him on the danger of locking railway carriage doors. If ever a man played with the devil and lost the stake, old Box was that man.

The train went on, and I went with it. I regretted

having to do so, but it would not do to have George Box's baggage lying around ownerless. By the time I had finished examining his satchel my regret had become poignant, and I had determined to be back in London by eight o'clock in the evening if I had to charter a special train to accomplish it. At the next stop I hastened to the telegraph office and wired to the judge as follows, paying ten shillings extra for a special messenger at the receiving point :—

“ Box died suddenly. Have found HER. Come immediately. You will find me at Standard Music Hall, Strand, at any time from eight until eleven this evening.”

I did not sleep any more ; but I raked in Box's baggage at Liverpool, gun-case and all, and arrived back in London as the clock was striking eight. How slick that last sentence sounds ! Just as easy ! And yet my mind has never performed so many mental gymnastics as it did during that solitary journey. There was not much in Box's satchel. A letter from Vine, full of pity and kindness that were a thousand times worse than contempt, was the first thing I read. Old Box had asked her to be his wife ; and I laughed when I gathered that fact in—laughed until my laughter struck strangely on my ears in the empty carriage. I wished that I had known it before old Box and I had parted. Then came a playbill of the Standard Theatre. It was

a triple bill, and its last item was both short and enigmatical, being simply—

CRAZY TESS OF MOJAVE.

Box had underlined this item. With the bill I found a cutting from a London morning paper, giving a description of Crazy Tess's first appearance on the previous night, and I read this, and knew Vine at once. She and her voice and her extraordinary originality were to be the sensation of London, so said this paper ; and it praised her and criticised her appearance until I could have choked the writer for thus holding her up to the public gaze. My experiences both bodily and mental were little short of agonising after I had read these things, and looked once more at the photograph. Weary as I was, I had no wish for rest, and hungry as I was, I had no wish for food. One great craving I had, and it was to see Vine again, and to hear her voice, and it made me afraid so that I trembled ; and it made me desperate so that the blood seemed to surge to my brain as I sat in that lonely compartment hour after hour with clenched hands.

the prayer of a poltroon, but it was the most genuine prayer I have ever uttered, and that young man took pity on me when he heard it.

"I will give you one injection myself," he said quietly ; and I could have kissed him when I heard it.

"More. More !" I cried as he charged the syringe, but more he would not give, and I had to be content with half my usual allowance. It made a new man of me all the same, and I thanked that gritty young man.

"No, I shall not give you that," said he, as I reached out my hand for my pistol. "I am sorry for you." There was actual pity in his eyes, so that I left the store ashamed. I had never before been pitied by a druggist's clerk.

"To the Standard Theatre," I cried to the cabman. My voice was blithe and natural again, and he sprang up to his seat astonished. I do not know how far the Strand is from the environs of St. Pancras, but it seemed many miles that night, and time seemed to fly, while the cab seemed to crawl. I was going to see Vine, Vine, Vine, Vine, and I kept repeating the name over and over again to myself like a senile idiot until the cab came at last to the theatre door. The cabman drew up at the main entrance, and a brass-buttoned official came up servilely ; but I swore both at him and the cabman. I did not want any boxes or stalls. If Vine and I were to meet face to face, it must be alone, and she must be in my power. I had no wish to show

her my face and scare her, where my voice might not sound and the power of my love could not be felt. I had never been in a theatre before, but I found my way at length into the back recesses of the pit, and stood there dazed for a while, my heart beating like a drum. I do not know what I expected, but gaily dressed folk came and went on the stage far away, and sang and laughed gaily in a manner that was torture to my spirit, so that by and by I found myself gripping on to the back of the seat in front of me as a patient grips the arms of a dentist's chair. After what seemed hours, the curtain went down, and the orchestra started in to play a miserable waltz, to which those around me added a maddening accompaniment of foot-beats. I could have screamed now ; and I rose up and shook my fist at the orchestra and put my fingers in my ears, so that my neighbours stopped their foot-beats, and drew away from me in fear ; but the orchestra went on, and I sat down, burying my face in my hands. A motherly old party bent over me and asked me what ailed me. She did not do it twice, but retired with great speed when I looked at her ; and thenceforward the seats immediately on either side of me remained vacant.

My sensations were exceedingly curious when that curtain rose again. The theatre was by this time packed, and I heard a hum of voices all round me ; but when Vine appeared the hum was hushed, and after that I was alone with her, theatre, people, environment, and

all actuality seeming to fade away. I alone was with her, and saw her sitting there in that desolate place by the moonlit water, where I knew not, but somewhere ways back in California, neither did I know how I had got to it ; but there I was, watching her, bound by her great eyes, which seemed to swim in sorrow, and which swept all else clear out of my mind. I cannot say how she was dressed, but her face was dark and her dress was crude, and she looked ever so lonely and heart-broken and beautiful ; and there was a fitness to her looks in all her wild surroundings, even to the sad purling of the waters which rippled and eddied at her bare feet. I tell you I looked into her eyes and my whole heart went out to her in pity, there, in that lonesome place. I would have given my life to take the sadness from her great big eyes.

She was crazy, crazy with sadness. I knew it at once, but she told me of it both in words and dumb show ever so gently, and I tried to hide my eyes and could not. She sang soon, and the first note caught hold of my heart and wrung it. It was the same sweet voice that used to charm me into my better self in the old Lodo days, but it was saddened now into a hopeless sadness that was far beyond tears and spoke of a heart that was dead. Words ? Words ? What do words amount to ? An eye with a soul behind it can express in a moment more than all the words that were ever written, and Vine's soul was suffering ever so.

Do I believe in souls ? I believe in Vine's anyway.
Here is her song :

"Gone. And I loved my boy so.
And O it is ever so good to love.
He died ?
They lied ! They lied !
He is far away up in the skies above,
And the changeful lights of those whelming skies
Are the lights of his tender following eyes
Lovingly watching me.
Weep ?
'Twas only sleep—
A beautiful sleep into boundless space,
Where his eyes still shine, and his wistful face
Is watching eternally.

"Cool is the starry night-time,
And O it is ever so good to lie
Quite still
Till my pulses thrill
And I swoon away into nights gone by ;
And his kiss falls again on my longing lips
In the shadowy grove where the gum-tree dips
His crest to the wooing breeze.
Yearn ?
My temples burn ;
But my heart goes out through the silent night
To a beautiful star with a soft love-light,
And I cry to it on my knees.

"Sometimes I kneel for hours so—
And O it is ever so good to kneel
And gaze
Through the starry haze
—Though the heart throbs pain and the senses reel—

Till night merges at last into misty grey
 And his voice seems to echo from far away
 On the banks of the shivering slough,
 Whist !
 Ways through that mist
 Where the waters lie wrapped in the half-veiled light
 And the wind rustles peace to the dying night,
 He is calling, ' Sweetheart ! Be true ! '

" O and my tired heart quickens
 And the breath of the dawn comes sweet and cool,
 Till frail
 Like a silver veil
 The vapours uplift, and the glistening pool
 And the earth lie lone, and my dreams grow dim
 In the sad light of day ; so I fly to him
 Far up in the boundless vast.
 Fret ?
 My eyes grow wet ;
 But I live in the skies till the waiting West
 Folds the world-weary Sun to her blushing breast
 And the wind softly breathes ' At last. ' "

Those were the words of Vine's song, and I can scarcely believe it when I see them written down. And the music ? Well, it was Vine's music—the music of her heart. Words. Words. What are words ? One bar of music can express more than all the subtlest of them ever coined. Strange music it was, sad, mournful, and broken as that of a mateless bird ; and it made me feel—— How ? I cannot tell you ; but I can get somewhere near it even with the aid of miserable words. Go sit alone in the nave of some dusky old cathedral and hear the organ tremble into sound that

risers and swells and ebbs and dies in a wordless wave-song of music ; or go at night-time far away into some waste place and harken to the bittern crying by the lonesome waters ; and, if you are built like me, you will feel a faint quiver of the thrill I felt that night. Words alone will convey no more to you than would a cathedral organ if struck up in a show tent, or a bittern if caged and croaking in a main street.

Vine had lost her mate ways back there by the lonely waters, and her grief had driven her crazy. I followed her step by step—followed the girl I knew, the girl I loved, with my eyes ever on her face. Her words were wistful and soft at first, and her motions were childlike and gentle. She was looking for him, and could not believe him dead. He was only lost for awhile, and she was trying to fancy he was coming to her in the darkness. Ever so hard she tried, and she cried to him and prayed to him ; and, after awhile, she let on to herself that he came, and caressed him, talking and chiding like a child the while, with her great soft eyes staring and her voice seeming to play on the quick of my heart. I tell you I cried as I crouched down behind that seat, and the tears fairly rolled down my cheeks. I had never shed tears before, and I tasted them with my tongue, and it struck me as odd that they should be salt.

And then Vine awoke in her madness, and I sprang up, grasping the back of the seat with one hand while

I shielded myself with the other. Shriek after shriek rang out from her lips now, and it was terrible to watch her, and to listen while she told of the wanton killing of her mate. Never have I heard such words. They seemed to choke her as she uttered them, and they seemed to burn me as they came. She was mad, she was mad. There was no doubt of it. The gentle, heart-broken girl had turned into a raging beast, wreaking its vengeance on an imaginary foe. God knows what I suffered when I saw her thus, human no longer, but a wild thing, the embodiment of the hate which she was wreaking in spirit on the man who had wronged her and robbed her—on me. That she knew of my presence I am certain, for our eyes met, and then hers held mine and glared like those of a human wild-cat until they seemed to paralyse me.

“Vine!”

It was I who shouted the name, and at the sound of it her voice seemed to dry up in her throat, and she staggered and fell, and the curtain came down with a rush, amid a roar of applause from all parts of the crowded house.

A commotion arose around me now, but I paid little heed to my surroundings, being down behind the seat sweating in terror; and a realisation of the fact that I was in a London theatre did not come to me until two policemen had gripped me by the shoulders and raised me to my feet.

"She is crazy. I tell you she is crazy. Keep her away!" were the words I said to them, and in reply they shook me with great violence.

I saw now that we three formed the centre of a group of excited men and women, who, I reckon, had been my more immediate neighbours during the performance. Their cries now struck on my dizzy brain for the first time, and their angry gesticulations came to have some meaning. Very angry and indignant they were, and many fists were shaken; but I noticed, as they buzzed around me, that they gave me a wide berth, as though I might bite.

"She is crazy. I tell you she is crazy," I again shouted stupidly, being still under a vague delusion that these people had understood Vine's story as I had understood it, and were bent on avenging her; and again the policemen shook me cruelly and yanked me around like a poss-stick.

"It's you that's mad. You was frothing at the mouth, and would have bit me if I hadn't run for the perlice. Yah."

The miserable woman who had bent over me earlier shouted this, and shook her fist and made other violent demonstrations where she stood at a safe distance; and the balance of the crowd echoed her words. I tell you a crowd look on a madman as on a mad dog, but fear him and hate him more because of his humanity; and had it not been for those two

policemen who held me and battered me and choked me, every one of that crowd would have run from that theatre in a headlong panic, as indeed they did later.

"I am not mad," I shouted. My remark came out in jerks, for I was by this time nearly choked, and a laugh and a hoot greeted it.

A big, wooden-faced fellow in uniform—a police-surgeon, I understood—bustled up now and looked me over. I did not seem to impress him favourably, and, though I could not see my own face, I realised as I followed his eyes that my appearance must be against me. My hat was gone ; I was covered with dust, and my clothing was sadly disarranged. "Look me in the eyes, my man. Come now," said he roughly. I did so, and passion was in my heart. I cannot have looked prepossessing. A man who has neither eaten nor slept for thirty-six hours, and who is suffering from the after-effects of a dose of morphia never does. He looked into my eyes and felt my pulse, and then he looked significantly at the policemen ; and when I saw that look of his, I became afraid. There was no appeal from that look, no hope of reasoning with the man who looked it ; and I think I knew when I saw it how a stamped lunatic must feel while he pleads his sanity to a blandly smiling doctor. But, for all that, I tried to reason. Mine had only been a temporary seizure, I pleaded, brought about by the reality

of the thrilling scene I had witnessed : I was better now, and sorry for my folly. It had indeed been ridiculous, and I hoped they would join me in a laugh over it. And then I laughed, and tried to do it naturally, feeling all the while like screaming. It was not a success that laugh, and I was frightened at the sound of it. Had I spent my life in practising, I could not have imitated the laugh of a madman better. The surgeon listened to it and smiled ; the people heard it and shrank back ; and then the surgeon motioned to the policemen to take me away.

The events which followed were full of movement, rapidity, and excitement. I started the movement by kicking one of the policemen on the shin and twisting myself from his grasp, but was immediately seized again and hoisted forward shoulder high. My kicks and struggles were desperate now, but absurdly feeble also, for I felt weak ; but, hoisted thus high, I could see around me and over the heads of the throng for the first time, and seeing I shouted wildly—

“ Judge ! Judge ! ”

He was standing calmly watching and listening close by the exit from the auditorium, towards which the crush was now swaying, and Vivian, pale, trembling, and clothed in fashionable female attire, was standing by his side. I should not have known her had he not held her hand. His mouth was set in a straight line, and though his face was quite serene, I knew, the

moment his eye caught mine, that if the strength and resolution of a single man could save me I should be saved. I had never realised what a man he was until I saw him calmly standing there ; I had never admired him so much, or known so keenly the gulf that lay between us ; I had never felt such a boundless faith in his power to do. I tell you, hoisted up and gripped by four strong arms as I was, and with half a hundred angry people between him and me, I yet felt secure when I saw him standing calmly there, and an enthusiasm came over me so that I shouted his name again, and there was a happy ring of triumph and gratitude in my shout. And then he fled !—gave me one more look, shook his head, gazed for a moment up into the roof where the clusters of electric light shone, and fled through the exit, whispering to Vivian as he dragged her with him. And I took his glance upward to mean that he consigned me into the hands of Providence ; and I took the shake of his head to mean that he, the judge, was whipped ; and I cursed him and his seed for ever and ever. The exit was a narrow one, and the people, as they filed through it one by one, talking and shouting excitedly, blocked it and impeded our progress. Once more I looked around me, my eyes turning stagewards this time, and once more I yelled a name despairingly.

“Vine ! Vine ! Help me.”

The crowd, catching the name I had cried out before,

turned and saw her standing up on the stage among the stage company. They were all there. Actors, dressers, scene-shifters, carpenters, even the stage call-boy had run at the sound of the excitement to look at the madman, and stood up there like a many-coloured cluster, smiling, chattering, and pointing. Vine, pale as death, and still dressed in her wildly picturesque costume, was in front of them all, and raised her beautiful arm on high in answer to my cry. She was trying to speak. I saw it, and my heart leapt out to her ; the crowd saw it and became silent.

"I know that man," she cried, and her voice thrilled me. "He is a murderer and a lunatic who has escaped. He murdered my best friend, he wrecked my life, and has followed me from my country to kill me. For God's sake do not let him go !"

Vine was beautiful ; Vine's voice appealed ; Vine's eyes were big with hate and terror ; but for all that I raised my fist and cursed her, and, as I did it, the crowd made a rush for me, calling me a devil. An empty gin bottle, hurled by the detestable woman who had fetched the police, struck me on the cheek ; a hundred blows and kicks were rained on me, and my coat was torn from my back in a twinkling by the two policemen, who still held on to me resolutely and tried to hustle me to the door. And then a sound occurred like the sound of the last trump, and it caused all to desist and look to the stage once more. Battered,

bleeding, sick as I was, I looked also, and I saw the judge up there with a silver cornet to his mouth, a revolver grasped in his right hand, and his eyes flashing fire. He stood alone, seeming to command the group on the stage and the mob below at once, and there was something in his face that was hardly human. I tell you that old man, with his grand face, his white hair, and the spirit which shone out from behind his eyes, fairly held the whole community so that not a man or woman of it dared to move.

"I shoot the first greaser that moves. Hear that? I shoot straight." Every one heard the statement, and relied on it, though his voice was quite low. "You ain't men. Hear that? In my country fifty men don't set on one that's hurt and worry him while he's held. That is a British trick. That man is my countryman. Will you let him go in peace, or will you have death and darkness in this place? I calculate to count three. One——"

Every eye was riveted on the judge, who now stood with his back against the proscenium and with his pistol levelled. There was no getting at him from behind.

"Two——"

The policemen would have released me now had not the wooden-faced surgeon recovered his manhood and presence of mind.

"Hold him," he shouted authoritatively; and then

he sprang bravely forward towards the judge. It was a plucky action in the light of the judge's face, and had its effect, for the mob made a move after the surgeon.

"Seems to me I see a man," said the judge, smiling, and then he said "Three," and fired, not at the oncoming people, or at the ceiling, but casually into the stage between his feet. The report rang out loudly and ominously, but he did not raise his pistol again. On swept the crowd with the surgeon in the van, and it seemed to me that the judge had lost his head, and that his death was imminent, for all that he was smiling. But I was wrong; for before that crowd was near enough to be even dangerous, every light in the theatre went out simultaneously, and by the final flicker of the many red-hot wires I saw him run forward and leap over the orchestra into the stalls below. I knew that he was making for me now, and he reached me, firing off his revolver into the air as he came; nor did the policemen await him.

"Yell, Jimmy. Yell like a maniac!" he shouted into my ear, and I did so while I grasped his hand and wrung it. I understood now. He and Vivian had gone in search of the electric light switch, and she had turned it off at the signal from his pistol, and had done it bravely. The scene which followed could only be judged of by its sound. I know that I screamed and cried and hooted, but my screamings were but a small

quota to the sounds which filled the theatre; and the crunchings, tearings, pantings, and groanings of the hundred odd human beings who were all madly struggling to pass through the little exit were terrible to listen to. I heard many individual cries of agony, but the predominant cry of terror, which the judge started, and which passed like lightning from mouth to mouth, was that the madman was loose and biting in the darkness.

"Yell, Jimmy, yell!" shouted the judge again into my ear, and as I filled my lungs to obey, he blew a ringing bugle call on the cornet close by my head which made my ears sing and my heart jump, and caused a stampede around us like that of wild horses chased by a prairie fire.

"Come, Jimmy, come quickly. Now is the moment," cried the judge into my ear, and he reached for my hand; but as he grasped it the massive iron-backed seat which I was grasping was overturned by the wild rush, and I with it. The judge came too, but he was on the top of the seat and I beneath it.

"Jimmy. Are you hurt?"

His head was close by my ear, and I struck madly at it over and over again, while the iron back lay across my thighs, and his weight kept churning up and down on it—yes, I struck and hit at him in my torment, just as a dog will bite at the iron gin in which its foot is caught. And then? Well, I took

little stock in anything for a while then. I knew that my thigh was broken, but I somehow did not seem to care a great deal, and things just slid along through my head in a dreamy, sickly way of their own. Once, on shipboard, I saw a man who had been steadily seasick for a week on an empty inside, and I reckon I felt about things in general pretty much as he felt. The judge lifted up the seat and hoisted me on to his shoulder. I knew it, but it didn't matter to me. He might have swallowed me for all I cared. Where he carried me I did not know, but it came to me dimly that he climbed a precipice in the dark and bumped into many things beyond it. What he actually did was to climb up on to the stage with me in his arms, and a herculean feat it was; and then, after much bumping and groping, he managed to reach a stage door which opened into a side street leading down to the Thames Embankment. I felt the fresh air distinctly, and hearing him panting and gasping under me, fancied myself on the old paddle-wheel ferry-boat which crosses the Lodo Bay. But no. It was not the ferry-boat. It was the ocean liner on which we had crossed to England, and she was pitching and rolling fearfully too—so fearfully that, for a second, I was rolled into my right senses. We were on the Thames Embankment, and the judge was swaying and staggering about under me like a drunken man. For one second I was conscious, and the pain of it made

on the placidity of my mental vacuum. I was made to suck up liquids as a baby sucks; I was hauled around and unswathed and swathed again; I was sponged with a baby's sponge, and dried with a baby's towel, and occasionally talked to in baby words of one syllable; and I fully realised how natural and proper is a baby's resentment at such treatment, and how powerless it is to evince it save by making faces, or by oral demonstrations. In short, I was in St. Mary's; and though I myself had to wait a long while before I gathered any information about the place, I think it well to give you some now. St. Mary's is not a hospital, but a sheltering Sisterhood, situated—never mind, but in the heart of London. It is not a public institution, nor was it founded to shelter such as I am. A middle-aged Lady (note the capital L, will you), an author very well known to-day under a *non de plume*, who once upon a time in her youth happened to go astray—very sadly so—built it and endowed it. There were no names at St. Mary's, but all were sisters, and even the sisters did not all know which of them it was who originated and financed the scheme. I think I saw them all during my stay there, but I never found out which was the benefactress.

There was no Head at St. Mary's, but each sister had an equal vote on every question, and whether a thing should be done or left undone was always settled

by ballot papers bearing a printed "yes" or "no." Perhaps some of my readers may have seen one or more of the sisters traversing the Strand, or Piccadilly, or Regent Street at night-time ; but it is not likely, for their number is small, and their means are very limited. At any rate to these streets—and to many other streets and places, the names of which I do not know—they go nightly, fearlessly addressing all those of their straying sisters they may meet, and helping all they can. They wear no uniform or other distinctive badge, saying that they are but weak women mixing with and sympathising with their kind, who do not wish to cut themselves off by wearing a robe of righteousness ; and, if I guessed rightly, each of these sisters had a sad little history of her own buried somewhere in her heart, which made her always speak very kindly and gently to the wild-eyed women (they were often young girls) who came to St. Mary's for shelter.

All names and antecedents were left outside St. Mary's, and no questions were ever asked, or inquiries made. It was left to the incomer to speak or be silent.

Oh, I assure you those sisters were always very comely and bright in their dress—bright as were their looks ; nor did they ever preach. They received no pay, but they did not say so ; and they managed to live and dress themselves on a tithe of

what an average charitable institution expends on the travelling expenses of its treasurers and secretaries. And——

A thought crosses my mind as I write, and I cannot help smiling and giving vent to it. My sinless readers think—now don't they?—that these details concerning St. Mary's sisters are but the preliminaries to an account of my own conversion. They look upon me—now isn't it so?—as an author writing a romance, instead of merely Jimmy Cope of Lodo, California, writing the truth; and they sneer at my lack of artistic conception and at my inconsistency, holding that to change Jimmy Cope into a convert, though it might facilitate the ending of the story, would be feeble in the extreme and against all human nature. I can see my Lord Bishop throwing down the book at this point with an exclamation of disgust at the thought of Jimmy a convert; and I can see dear Miss Bishop when, later on, she has surreptitiously carried the same book to her chamber—Miss Bishop never reads of such people as myself in the drawing-room—anxiously turn to the last page. It is all right, and her eyes lose that listless look which has momentarily come to them—just that look which her drawing-room reading engenders—and she turns back with a satisfied smile. You are right, my readers. My conversion would be against all human nature, but you should pity me for it and not condemn me with

righteous self-satisfaction. Do you think that, had I been my own manufacturer, and had possessed my present knowledge of the world, I should have built myself as I am? You are ways off if you do. I know that any one of those sisters took more real pleasure out of life in a day than I have ever done in a year, but it ain't my fault if I cannot understand how they did it. I own that I should insert a wedge out of their constitutions into my works had I the chance, but I have not, and I shall die as I was born. See here, young fellow, before sitting up in judgment on me, you take some paper—many sheets of it—and write down truthfully your private thoughts for awhile from day to day, and see how the record compares with my acts. You may hammer a nigger for being a nigger, but all the hammering in the world won't change his colour.

Perhaps it may be as well to return to the sisters.

As it chanced, one of them happened to be speaking to a woman (not that many would call her such, for the world has selected the most horrible sounding names in its language for such as her) in the very by-street into which the judge and I emerged on the night which ended, so far as I was concerned, in the last chapter, and the two had followed us amazed, and had seen the finale.

I do not know how ~~you~~ feel about the judge, and—no offence—I do not care a great deal; but I know it

was one of those very rare occasions on which I came very near to feeling, when, one night, in St. Mary's, he took my hand (our beds almost touched each other) and told me apologetically what had happened. The sister in charge had left the room.

"You see, Jimmy, it was this way," he said. "My head was spinning and my pulse was going at a deuce of a gait before ever I entered that theatre. I was not fit to come to London, Jimmy, but I got your wire and—well, I was not going back on a friend. See? Fireworks were going off in my head as I jumped down off that stage, and my side gave out as I clomb up on to it again with you in my arms. It started bleeding, Jimmy, from the rheumatics Senor Andrade gave me with his knife; and I left a track of blood all the way down that side street. I meant to give you a rest on that wall, but my knees gave out before I made it, and your head struck it instead of your stern. I am real sorry. I should have had more grit; for, mind you, I could see yet, and speak right enough; for I managed to tell the sister we were hurt, and to favour her with a smile before I lost count of things in general."

Our arrival in a four-wheeler at dead of night, accompanied by the sister and the girl, had caused a sensation at St. Mary's, where no erring male had ever been received before; and our eventual admittance was in no way due to me, but to the judge's white hair and noble face, and the look in his eyes when he

opened them from time to time ; and to the fact that two hospitals were tried *en route* in vain by our rescuing sister. Given an old man sorely wounded and with eyes like the judge's, and few women could have resisted him ; but those sisters, when they had rendered first aid and sent for the doctor, held a committee meeting before they finally decided to put us to bed and care for us. When the doctor came he opined that we should soon be moved anyway to permanent beds in small lots of freehold land ; but he was wrong about me, and my concussed intellect settled down satisfactorily to the new-born baby stage in five days' time. I spent three days after that in staring up at the white ceiling, and in sleeping, or instinctively feigning to sleep, in order to escape being worried into effort ; so that when one evening I awoke to the fact that the droning which had sounded in my ears so often of late was the sound of voices, and that one of them was the judge's, I had been in that little white room at St. Mary's for eight days. I did not know the judge's voice at once, mind you, it was weaker and slower than it used to be, and he often hesitated for a word, which irritated me extremely when I came to listening to and following his sentences ; for I could never find the missing word either ; in fact, for some time, my listening meant nothing more than a mechanical following of, and attempted silent reproduction of his word-sounds,

which often fell on my ears dreamily, much as the voice of a reader falls on the ears of a drowsy child.

"Will you come and sit by me?" he said one night, and a rustle followed his words. I knew that rustle, for the little sister had grown on me much as a monthly nurse grows on a baby. It must have been late, for the light was very dim, and the cracks in my beloved ceiling above were shrouded in gloom; nor could I see the fly-marks there to form them into endless aggravating patterns that would never come right.

I cannot give the sister's words, because they were so gently spoken—almost whispered—that I could seldom hear them, but she spoke often. Said the judge—

"I like you to stroke my hair that way, child. Silky and white? It was not always so; and yours is not, for I can see a little love curl peeking out from under your cap now. Hush? Why? Are you ashamed of it, and of your face that you turn it away? You are young yet—give me your hand a minute, so—and you are real good and tender too. How do I know it? Because I have watched you kneeling there when you thought me asleep. Words said and deeds done in public don't count with me. See? Parson Slick talks mighty fine in the pulpit, but Slick's eloquence would count for nothing had you seen him arrange his forelock beforehand in the vestry looking-glass.

All the kneeling and bowing in the world cannot wipe out the impression given by a would-be-hidden yawn in church. Grown folks, as a general thing, are themselves only when no one is looking. Why do you shake your head that way? It is so. Once, way back in the mines, we had a cook so clean that he changed his clothes twice a day, and bought three bars of soap a week. I thought everything of that man until one evening I happened, unbeknown, to look in through the shanty window and saw how the dirty plates were washed. How? He just put them down on the ground and smoked while the dog licked them clean. Why, the sight of one surreptitious kiss given thirty-five years ago wrecked my life and knocked my heart callous as a drawn tooth. You see, child, the woman was my wife and the man wasn't me. Your eyes remind me considerable of hers and——" But here the judge broke off and laughed, and his hand came down on the bed-clothes with a feeble thud. I have never heard such a laugh as that, and I fancy the little sister smothered it with her hand. Anyway I heard her whispering to him, and after a while he started again, stuttering some.

"Dying? I know that. I have been doing it steadily for a week. No, I am not afraid, so long as I get a grip of that woman's hand in the next world and we go to judgment together. It was she who murdered my soul, not I, and I died then, long ago,

a far bitterer death than I am dying now. Yes, yes, yes. Piety is a fine thing, and the Bible is a mighty fine book, but they ain't for me. As well offer a telescope to a man whose eyes have been knocked out. Do I hurt you, child? It is always the way. Why, certainly I believe there are such things as genuine good and genuine repentance, but they are rare, and are not advertised. Would you like to see me try to come to a heartless, humbugging compromise with my Maker with my last breath? No, child, no. I ain't a coward."

The same sister was not always with us, but the judge rarely talked much save to the little one with the golden-brown love curl that would not be tucked away. They were for ever talking, and she came to have a great influence over him after a while, so that he seemed to see things through her eyes at last. He always greeted her with the same question, "Have you found her?" meaning Vivian, whom he fancied to be still roaming about the streets of London in search of him—a fancy that nearly drove him crazy at times. Every night, no matter how late, and every morning, no matter how early, he asked this question anxiously; and he made her go through every little detail of her search and of her night's wanderings, so that I heard snatches of many strange stories of straying sisters of all ages and conditions of life, and came to the conclusion that though perhaps London and its parliament

and its clerical army might possess that moral tone which I lacked, they watched these thousands of girls sliding along a public road to the devil knowingly and complacently enough.

The little sister had also had her tragedy, and told the judge so very humbly, and how she had forgiven and tried to be good, and had gained faith : but she never gave any particulars of that story, nor did the judge ever ask for them. But I know she had a story, for one day, when I had become convalescent and could hobble about on crutches, I went through her desk—which she had foolishly left unlocked upon being suddenly called away—and I came across a poem addressed to one Cecil. It was quite a long affair, and there were blots here and there, and spots where the ink had run ; and I am afraid Cecil must have been the young man who had taught the little sister to understand and sympathise with the wild-eyed girls who so often came to St. Mary's. I can only remember one verse. Here it is—

“ O Cecil, hadst thou raised a child,
A pure untainted child up on thy knee
To kiss thee ;—one that loved thee as they love,
As I loved then, and pausing, chanced to see
Down deep into those eyes upraised to thine
Soft depths of innocence where seems to shine
The initial spirit touch of God undimmed,
Thou hadst not then put out that light in mine.”

That was it, and the lines seemed to me tolerably well,

and most certainly honestly, strung together ; and I looked at her when she returned, and read her life in her face ; and that feeling—that same annoying cathedral organ feeling which comes to me so rarely—was in the air for awhile. I found some other things in that desk, a little coral necklace, and a golden love curl—not unlike her own—wrapped up in paper, and a pair of tiny baby shoes ; but I looked in vain for a wedding-ring in the desk and on her hand. One of the baby shoes lies before me now. I took it to see what would happen ; and, would you believe it, that little woman, when she had discovered her loss, moved about for weeks like a cat that has lost her kittens. They certainly had one subject in common those two, and never seemed to tire of talking about children and young people generally ; in fact, I noted that she loved to lead the judge into this strain, and I have heard her more than once cry silently at some words of his. For his voice used to come quite differently on these occasions—just as his eyes used to change and soften when Vivian was with him—and once the little sister fetched a book and very modestly and bashfully read a poem called “Children” aloud to him, saying that it was written by a countryman of his. He waited until she had finished and closed the book, and then repeated the poem by heart, and with so much feeling that she hid her eyes. I also used to weep maudlin tears about nothing at all at that period of my illness.

It was soon after this that the judge took to talking nonsense to himself, and kept at it steadily, too, for three days and nights, so that I got little rest, and my nerves went all anyhow ; and then, on the third night, when at last I had got to sleep, I felt his hand wandering about my face like a blind man's, and then it felt its way along my side until it finally struck on my hand and tried to press it. I believe I shoved it away, for I was sleepy, and had borne all his stutterings and mouthings and nonsense patiently for three days ; and I said——no matter. I was ill anyway. But the sheet was drawn up over his face when I awoke again, and the little sister's cross lay on the sheet, and she was sitting in the window crying silently.

Since writing the line immediately above, I have looked at a photograph. I found it among the judge's effects which I recovered after leaving St. Mary's, and it is of a woman with a most beautiful face. On its back is written "My wife," and then a date that is ever so many years old ; but the writing is traversed with a great black passionate line. I also found a rag doll with cotton-wool hair, and a boat made of newspaper ways down at the bottom of one of his trunks, and I undid the boat and found a date on the newspaper. It was nearly thirty years old ; and then I felt almost sorry that I had undone it, for I seemed to have undone the patient work of ten little fingers long dead. Seems to me that the judge and the little sister had

much more in common than they ever shared in words.

No. I was not extra sorry when I saw that sheet drawn up over the judge's face. I never had cared much to see his eyes anyway, and there had never been much in common between us. He was a sinner, so am I ; but somehow he managed to be wicked on an honourable, chivalrous basis of his own, and I always dreaded his finding out my style of wickedness. And—well, it would have hurt him to find it out, would it not ? There was always something somewhere back of the judge that drew young women and children, and it was this that made me distrust him so.

CHAPTER XXII

I HAVE often wondered whether philosophers carry out their precepts in private life. Had I the time to spare, I reckon I could become a tolerably successful paper-philosopher. I have the proper pugnacity and sense of self-infallibility, and should be quite indifferent as to how my proclamations might affect other people. Perhaps, when I attain to the age of seventy or so, I shall become one, and write a treatise on the vanity of things in general. Solomon, I fancy, was pretty well played out before he started in. One can hit all creation in the eye as a paper-philosopher, and enjoy the result in perfect safety. "A philosopher," says my dictionary (yes, I use a dictionary constantly to help me over the peculiarities of British spelling), "is one who is profoundly versed in any science." Also, "One who acts calmly and wisely." Now the judge was not a true philosopher. He was too impulsive. His science was that of Life—so is mine; and I reckon, that, at the age of seventy, I shall know something about it.

He knew something—just enough to land him in the mud everlastingly ; and I—well, I am more or less in the mud myself at present.

But what set me talking of philosophy was the remembrance of my conduct during the eight long weeks which followed the judge's demise. They were very weary weeks, and during them I did my very utmost to be philosophical while the sisters tried to whitewash me back and front.

Rules—feminine rules—abounded at St. Mary's, and every one of them was undoubtedly good and salutary for females. But I was a male, and felt myself to be a failure from the first. They could not get a hold to handle me.

A total separation from, and rest from, the world, old surroundings, associations, grooves, and temptations ; and work (if one would or could do it), with living examples of good constantly present in the shapes of the sisters, were what one got at St. Mary's ; while a constant, though unpretentious, whitewashing process was kept up right along as well. What the sisters liked was to see their captives kick at all this. Tears and rebellion and a fight, followed by much travailling of spirit and weeping, followed again by resignation and patience and a slow awakening to the new influence, were what they liked to see ; and I allow they often saw them all genuinely among those women. They knew how to work them, and taught

them to be hospital nurses and schoolmistresses and dressmakers and servants. But I did no kicking, and there is where I licked them. My tongue had run amuck during my illness, and they had looked at my syringe-punctured arms and—the little sister with the love curl told me this, and looked mighty pretty as she did it—at my face, and they knew quite well that I was very wicked. I agreed with them. I was anxious to do it; and I took their first coat of whitewash as though I had been ready sized, and thanked them kindly for the trouble they were taking over me; and it just knocked them all endways. There was no fight about it. I did not argue; and, when they seemed at a loss what to make of me, I said I was willing to be anything from a missionary upwards. I listened to all they said, read what they gave me to read, and repented right along from the word go. I tell you I would have done much more than this for them, because they were real good to me; but, no matter how I tried, I seemed to take the heart right out of them. Yes, they were ever so good to me, and tried to take pleasure in being so; but, as the little sister told me in that candid way of hers, the pleasure never came.

"You seem to think," said she, "that you can smilingly repent to order."

"I want to please you and repay you," I replied.

"Do you think that kind of repentance pleases us?" she cried—and for once in a way her cheeks took fire

and her eyes sparkled. "I would sooner hear you blaspheme than repent as you do, with a smiling face and eyes of stone."

"I know no other way," I replied. "You are good, and like it, and understand it, and have given up the world for it. I suppose one is bound to, eh? I do not want to, and I can't understand how you feel. See? But, little fire-cracker, I am on to the fact that your style of goodness needs plenty of grit, and I admire you for that ever so. It is new to me, that's a fact; and I opine it is as different from the goodness I have hitherto struck as is the song of a bird in an African forest from a brass band in a London street. But it is not rational or natural, my dear. Gritty? You are right. I reckon it requires about as much grit to be good as you in this world as that African song-bird would need to come and sing atop of the sootiest chimney in London. But, my dear, it would not come. It ain't such a blamed fool; and if it did, the first instinct of every man, woman, and child in the vicinity of that particular chimney would be to yank up a stone and throw it at that eccentric bird. Why I——"

But I got no further; for the little sister stamped her foot, and crying "Stop!" looked into my face. Then she left me; and she seemed to shiver. She was just as patient and kind after that; so were they all. They read to me, and talked to me, and tried in a

hundred ways to touch on the right spot; and they would have done it, too, had the spot been there. But it was not. It had been once, faintly, but Vine had played on it and marked it private.

There were many rules at St. Mary's, and they were rapidly enforced on me, though I was in no way a legitimate inmate. Newspapers, or any printed matter dealing with current worldly events, were not allowed, and this was my greatest trial. The sisters held that a pure atmosphere, and a temporary total break with the old life, its sins and its memories, was essential to a new start on a better life, and that the average newspaper would taint any atmosphere. This may be so, but for right down genuine undiluted sameness and dullness I have never struck anything that equalled St. Mary's pure atmosphere.

Letter-writing was allowed, and I wrote several hundreds, but I never sent one. I should think that, in my anxiety, I wrote a hundred to Lister alone, but I burnt them all, and wisely. Could any ordinary man, who had been dead for ten weeks under ordinary circumstances, arise and look around him, he would be surprised how hopelessly he had lost track of things, and how he had been lost trace of. I was not an ordinary man; I had not died to the world under ordinary circumstances; and I had sense enough to surmise that much might have happened in ten weeks, and to refrain from giving myself away.

Visits were allowed from persons approved of by the committee ; but I, not knowing a soul in the world whom I could trust, had no visitors. Two matters interested me during that weary time—one of them the growth of a beard, the other a constant speculation as to how much shorter my broken thigh-bone would eventually be than my whole one ; and—well, besides these two matters, I had sufficient interest in the little sister with the love curl to have kissed her had she not always shrunk from me instinctively and against her will and steadfast endeavour. On my very last day there she came to me, and asked me to promise never again to use morphia. I promised, and she looked into my eyes, and my promise seemed to please her so that she looked happy and said it was given honestly. I did mean that promise, and was glad she shook my hand and was grateful for it. She was a good woman, so were they all ; and I can appreciate the heroism of it just as I can appreciate the heroism of Don Quixote. They all shook hands with me and wished me well before I left ; but I felt I had not won a friend among them, and saw in their faces no hope that their good wishes would be fulfilled. This riled me ; for I had tried my best for ten weeks to be nice and accommodating, and had failed ; while the judge had just done and said what he durned well listed for two weeks, and they all seemed to hope he had gone kerslap to heaven.

So much for the sisters, whom I left for ever when I went out again into the world, minus half an inch of thigh-bone, plus a limp and several inches of black beard, but otherwise unchanged. They were good women. I still had the judge's diamond ring, my secret cipher pocket-book, the two baggage deposit slips, a half-crown, and a threepenny-bit. These I had left in my pockets, and they were there when my clothes were returned to me. Nothing had been touched ; and I am sure those sisters had never even gone through my pockets ; which struck me, and still does, as an extraordinary proof of how they must have schooled themselves. I reckon there is not one woman in a million but will read an open letter if left lying around ; not one wife in ten million but will go through her husband's pockets once in a while. Such acts are natural and instinctive among women—and with me also ; but I do not think one of those sisters would have read a postcard. Somehow I never looked on them as women. They were, to me, but monotonously good beings of the female gender. A woman, to appeal to one as such, must be more than that. Eve was a woman right enough, but she gave herself away. A woman should never do that. She should realise that she is only a nucleus around which the male imagination plays ; and that to be openly only what she is really, is the surest way to spinsterhood. Time enough for that when she is safely married. Marriage is the

death-bed of the male imagination with regard to human angels; indeed, it usually seems to sober up his conception of things in general. It has always struck me that the person who invented the female veil should be immortalised by the sex as the greatest of teachers. Listen to me, Miss. If you wish to excel as a woman, keep your veil down. It may perhaps hide some little thing that you have, but it will most certainly hide a hundred thousand charms that you have not. Don't worry about talking any, for probably you have nothing much to say; but smile if you like, and show those pearly teeth, and look at him through those eyes of yours all veiled as they are by your long curling lashes. Believe me, the average man-fool will see stacks of things of which you never dreamed behind those eyes, and will draw up out of their seeming depths such thoughts and yearnings as would turn your head giddy to think of, let alone understand. I think it was the judge who said that there were two incentives to good works—hopeless plainness, and old age; and I remember he made a calculation that ten million spinsters would die annually from ennui, and the knowledge that they had been forgotten, were it not that church work gave them an interest and a little importance in life. At the same time he remarked that men seldom thought of becoming churchwardens until their hair was becoming white, or had already led the way to the grave. “Folks talk of their neigh-

bours (never of themselves)," said he, "as having one foot in the grave. It is a stupid expression, and they should substitute hair for foot. Men, flowers, trees, vegetables, and most everything, start in to die from the top, not the bottom ; and I—— "

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See those ? They stand for the balance of the judge's remarks which my publisher has struck out. "Pernicious and immaterial" are the words he has pencilled in the margin.

I met the doctor on the doorstep. He considered himself a good man. He said—

"So you are going at last. I am glad of it. Thanks ? Tut, tut. True, I attended you ; but I would attend a dog, if it comes to that, and it would thank me with its eyes. You cannot. I do not believe there is a spark of good, or feeling, or gratitude in you ; but—well, I should like your skull when you die. By the way. If you wish to go mad and die quickly, resume your morphia. Neither your brain nor your heart will stand a month of it. No. I will not take your hand."

That is what he said, and he thought he hurt me. But he was wrong. The farewell of the sisters had hurt me some though, and the feel of my shortened leg as it limped down the steps to the hansom hurt me considerable.

I was afraid as I crossed that street, and I hurried into the hansom. The world frightened me. It had run along just the same while I had been immured, and I had lost my anchorage and my bearings in it, so that I was shy and timid and nervous, and felt that I must keep quiet and take reckonings for awhile before putting out again into the open sea.

But I was seen. A man on the opposite pavement dodged round the corner while I was telling the driver to drive to King's Cross, and the sight of him made me sweat in a moment.

I have often since thought of that drive and its deadly loneliness and dreariness. I had not a friend in London or in the whole world; I had not an inkling of what might have passed with regard to the Mulready property; but that something must have happened I knew, and I did not like to speculate on it. I have felt a faint tinge of the same kind of foreboding when opening my mouth for a dentist's inspection. It seemed to me that half the spies in London might be watching for me. Rembrandts do not disappear unmarked; and madmen do not cause riots in theatres, and assault the police, to be forgotten. I tell you I trembled in that cab, and my nerves acted cruel.

I discharged the hansom at King's Cross, and thereby got rid of my half-crown. I then recovered my baggage and had it loaded on to a four-wheeler.

Having accomplished this, I drove to St. Pancras and recovered Box's baggage also; and while it was being piled on top of mine I went to the news-stand and bought a newspaper. This purchase left me with a cash capital of twopence; but it was necessary. I wanted to find some place to go to, and I found it under the heading "Apartments and Board and Residence." Here it was stated that Mrs. Jagg, of 287, Victoria Street, Hammersmith, had vacant a refined and convenient sitting-room in a quiet neighbourhood, with a bedroom of the same nature. When I returned to the cab it was loaded, and the large white letters on Box's gun-case were glaring around London from its roof. I could have shouted when I saw it, and I climbed up impetuously, snatched it down, and threw it inside. When I had done this I felt a fool; and, turning round, saw a man dodge behind a pillar. He was the same man who dodged away outside St. Mary's. He had followed me, and I seemed to know his back. Mrs. Jagg's apartments in Hammersmith, though in a quiet neighbourhood, were not quiet. To begin with, eight little children—most of them babies—and a sister, and Mr. Jagg all dwelt somewhere in the basement of No. 287—that is when the children were not sitting on the doorstep or climbing about the area railing. Mrs. Jagg emerged from this basement when my cab stopped. Her face was dirty, and three or four little Jaggs were clinging

to her skirts ; but I was glad to see her. She paid my cab fare when she saw my baggage.

I entered the sitting-room. It was a dismal place at all times, but now, in the fading light of evening, its chillness and desolation were terrible to me ; and Mrs. Jagg and the little Jaggs were almost more than I could bear. Mrs. Jagg was a baby-worn woman, with eyes like those of a bewildered sheep, and a perpetual preoccupied smile. How she managed that smile licks me. Her talking powers almost equalled her smiling ones ; and, though her range of subjects was limited, it did not matter to her ; for they were arranged, and revolved inside her head, circularly, and a complete revolution only meant a fresh start. One complete revolution took place while she was lighting my fire, and setting out my tea things, and suggesting dinner. I found that her dinners revolved also, and that their circle was exceedingly small. Mrs. Jagg was not only the mother of eight, but she had expectations. All her children were not Jaggs, though ; for some of them were Kellys. "That was Kelly," said Mrs. Jagg, and she pointed smilingly to an enlarged photograph of a melancholy man with chin-whiskers that hung above the mantel. "Jagg can raise his hand to his children when he's minded, but he daresn't touch mine," she added. Then I heard all about the little Jaggs and their ailments, and about the little Kellys and theirs, with some details about Mrs. Jagg's own varicose veins

thrown in. She gloried in those veins. She generally spoke of her present husband as "that Jagg"; and he was a terrible reprobate according to her. But I came to have a profound pity for Jagg before I had listened long; and when Mrs. Jagg and her smile finally departed to the lower regions, where the children were holding revel among the crockery, I locked the door behind her and sank down into a horse-hair armchair, quite unstrung. I took my newspaper now, and started in to read it under the melancholy eyes of the defunct Mr. Kelly. It told me nothing of what had occurred during the ten weeks, and, throwing it down, I went to the window and looked out. My nerves were all anyhow. Rain was pouring down outside, and darkness had come, but by the flickering light of a gas lamp across the way I made out a figure, and I felt sure it was the same I had seen outside St. Mary's. When I had made sure of it, I went back to the horse-hair chair and put in some more miserable time there. I was not a man, but a pitiful being lacking an essential component part. I could dare nothing, originate nothing, think of nothing that did not scare me, and felt infinitely desolate and impotent; while my nerves were so on edge that I kept jumping from my chair at the slightest sound. I knew what I lacked. I wonder whether you will read this, little sister of St. Mary's. If so, let me tell you that I fought against the craving for two hours, all for the sake of that promise I gave

you—fought such a fight as even you, with all your goodness, cannot imagine; and, when the fight was over, I arose and looked into the looking-glass above the mantel, to see, in myself, the most abject hollow-eyed being of which I can conceive. That promise was the one promise to a woman—apart from Vine—that I had ever meant, and I fought hard for it.

When I emerged from my bedroom half an hour later, Mrs. Jagg dropped the dinner tray which she happened to be carrying upstairs. I had been toying with a razor for a part of the half-hour, and I think my face must have frightened her. Anyway she was silent for a moment, and I seized it to run to the front door and slam it behind me.

There are many pawnshops in Hammersmith, and in one of them I pawned the judge's ring for a tenth of its value. There is no law prohibiting the sale of hypodermic syringes, so I entered a drug store and bought one. I should judge that I entered a dozen others, offering a five-pound note for a syringeful of morphia, and was twice forcibly ejected; and I can tell you few men can have felt more miserable than I did when I was ejected for the last time. A vacant lot of ground was handy, and I lay down there while the rain poured down; and, covering my face with my hands, sobbed aloud. After a while a policeman came along, stirred me up with his fist, and told me to move on. I moved, and I cursed that policeman

while I was doing it ; yet I know now that I should have shaken his hand instead. The feel of his great foot in my ribs was as good as a tonic to me, and roused me to such desperation as cared for nothing. I meant to have that stuff now or die, and hailing a passing hansom, I started out to get it. The policeman stared after me with his mouth open.

King's Cross station was the spot I drove to—a long drive, during which I sat holding on to the folding doors. One picture was in my eyes as I did this, that of a glass-stoppered bottle and a section of gold-lettered shelving. Once I looked at the clock, and I fancy the time was 10.45, but I am not sure ; for I saw that bottle and shelving on the clock's face.

I left the cab in a little by-street near King's Cross, told the driver to await me there, all night if necessary, and gave him a sovereign with the promise of another. Then I limped away. I was going to the drug store where the gritty young man had been kind to me. I reckoned on its being closed, but I did not mind that. I meant to find ingress. It was closed, but I was in luck, for a light still burned within it, and, through a chink, I saw that it had an occupant, not my young friend, but an old man who was working on the books by the light of a single pedestal gas jet which stood upon the prescription counter. It was interesting, but the moment my eyes had located him, they travelled upwards to the shelves high up behind his head. The

glass-stoppered bottle was there still, and my heart bounded when I saw it. I pulled out my pocket-book now, tore a sheet from it, and wrote somewhat after this manner, with a pencil, in the dark :—

Urgent: Mr. B. H. S. Phelps Jr.

Cal m: folia ag gr $\frac{1}{111}$
 Ma sic figi no 3 $\frac{m \times x}{111}$
 vigin. foin & C. 3 $\frac{2 \sqrt{v}}{111}$
 yastor hi Za. 3 $\frac{1}{111}$
 Anna Lib Ph.

And, when I had written this, I rang the night bell. The old man was slow in answering it—so slow that I seized the bell-handle again and pealed the bell continuously. This was rash, but I cared for nothing in my craving for the drug now in sight. He came to the door on the run now, opened it six inches, and asked fearfully what the matter was. I thrust the leaf from

my pocket-book into his hand, and said, "My wife is dying. Quick. Quick; or the doctor says she is gone." He took that writing to his prescription counter, and commenced to study it; and I entered unhindered and watched him. He found considerable food for study in that document, and never did make it out; but he bent his head mighty low over it, and did his best. I suppose I was about a second in getting hold of that pestle, and another in measuring the distance between myself and the bottle, and another in planning out my surest mode of securing it; but even in that short time beads of perspiration had started out on his bald head. I saw them as I struck at the head with the pestle, and their gleam was the last I saw of him before he disappeared under the counter. In ten seconds more I had got that morphia bottle, turned out the gas, and left the store. I had not hurt him much; for I heard him bellowing out for help as I got into the cab which was waiting faithfully in the by-street. I was a man once more before I had been in the cab five minutes; and I felt as spry as a bird and ready to face the world when I arrived at No. 287, Victoria Street, Hammersmith, and let myself in with a latch-key. This was as well; but I started and flinched all the same when I entered Mrs. Jagg's dusty sitting-room, because a man was sitting in the horse-hair chair waiting for me.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE man sat with his back to me, and with his feet negligently balanced on the hob of the ruddy fire-grate. A bottle of whisky stood near by, and a glass containing some of the same spirit piping hot stood by the bottle. I knew that back. It was the same I had seen skulking about outside St. Mary's, and at King's Cross station, and by the lamp across the way ; and the sight of it made me feel considerable sick. But I advanced boldly notwithstanding my feelings, and, hearing me, he turned his head. The reaction I felt when I saw his miserable face was so pleasant that I could have hugged myself. But I did not. I drew myself up sternly and cried—

“How dare you, Brill ? Take your feet off that hob and stand up instantly.”

Brill did not stand up. He shifted his feet to a more comfortable position, took a drink and smiled. I did not know that he could smile ; I did not know what had come to him ; but, whatever it was, it made me speechless with anger, and, striding forward, I

grasped his arm. Then I let it drop again. His other hand was resting on his knee, and in it was a revolver at full cock. He pointed the pistol at me, saying, "Sit down, Jimmy Cope, sit down and rest yourself. The pews are free."

I sat down. There was a snap about Brill that made me do so; and he lowered the weapon to his knee again, took a short black clay pipe from his vest pocket, loaded it with black shag, lit it, took a draw and a spit, and then looked at me. I tried, as I watched him going through these processes, to discover a tremble in his hands, or the bracing of a muscle, or any sign whatever that his ease of manner was an effort to him, but all I discovered was that his jaw seemed to have grown several inches outwards, and that his eyes had become less like a turtle's and more like a snake's.

"What the devil is the matter with you, Brill?" I asked.

He laughed by way of reply—put his pipe down on the table and laughed the damndest, meanest, harshest laugh I have ever heard, after which he took another drink and resumed his pipe.

I sprang up now with the purpose of going outside and summoning the police. I wanted to get outside badly anyway, but Brill told me to sit down again, and I did it quickly because he handled his pistol like an expert. I tried a little bluff, however.

"See here, Brill," I said boldly, "I ain't on to what your fooling means, but an escaped convict should be careful how he fools when the police are around. A word from me and——" But Brill broke in with, "You are right, Jimmy Cope, and I have been careful—very careful. I am not a common fuddling criminal, Jimmy. You will understand that as time goes on; and if you knew my right name, I fancy you would know of me though you come all the way from Lodo. Forgery was my game five years ago, and though I was nabbed in the end, it made me famous. What is your game, Jimmy? What are you?" Brill resumed his pipe calmly. My voice was not calm as I said—

"Let me tell you this, Brill. I am a gentleman, and I will not tolerate familiarity or impertinence from——" I said considerably more than that, but Brill's harsh laughter drowned the rest of it. Brill was an exasperating smoker. He had the habit of removing his pipe from his mouth and puffing out smoke deliberately with a sound like the bursting of bubbles. He did this for some time after he had quit laughing, and then said drawlingly—

"Shall I tell you what you are, Jimmy? You are a liar, and a forger, and a thief, and a woman-beater, and a murderer, and a morphia fiend, and Gawd"—he pronounced it that way; indeed his mode of speaking generally was cruel—"knows what else." He looked at

me for a while as a boxer looks at an antagonist whom he has just hit in the wind, and then continued drawling worse than ever, "And yet, with all these accomplishments, you are only second-class goods, Jimmy. Since I have known you, you have not said one word of importance, either to your late pard the judge, or to poor old Box, or to any one else, that I have not heard, and you have not done one deed that I have not watched. I was in the train with you when you came to London, and I travelled to Liverpool and back with you, and watched you crawl out and kill your friend. This pistol I hold is your pistol, and I got it from the chemist with whom you left it. I know the trunk in which the Rembrandt lies, and I know that you love that loose play-actress woman they call Crazy Tess as much as you can love any one but yourself."

"She is not a loose woman." I jumped up and yelled this, for it somehow hurt me horribly to hear Vine spoken of in that way, and made me forget all else for the moment ; but Brill waved me down with his pipe, and went ruthlessly on—

"Yes. You love that loose woman still, as you loved her in California. I did not watch you in the theatre for nothing, and you two would make a fine couple. But you must smother it, Jimmy. It has spoilt you so far, and it will go on spoiling you."

"She is not a loose woman," I shouted again. "Take back those words, man, or——"

"All right, all right ; I take them back," Brill said with a laugh, "but you will find out soon enough. Sit down, sit down, or you will be hurting yourself. I must cauterise that nerve of yours before I touch on it again. No offence meant. I was only telling you what I knew. And now, Jimmy Cope," he went on, laying down his pipe and searching for my eyes, "I want a half-share in that Mulready property. I will assume no back debts ; I will not appear publicly ; but I will just take a half-share and direct your movements. I don't know how you worked that will, Jimmy, but it is first-class work—so good that I doubt if you worked it at all—and I mean to chip in with you on that, and push it through. The price of my silence is a half-share, Jimmy. What do you say ?"

I did not say anything, and Brill resumed his pipe, watching me while he smoked. He seemed in no hurry, and the expression of his face was one of absolute assurance.

I took my time—probably fifteen minutes. He seemed to wish me to think the matter well out, and I did it. My brain was still bright and alert, and my thoughts ran along lucidly and logically. The fight was an interesting one, and, as I marshalled the facts, possibilities, and contingencies together in my mind, I came almost to enjoy the effort, much as a chess

player enjoys a promising game. Brill had been too clever and had overreached himself. That was the conclusion I came to, and when I had come to it, I broke the silence by laughing softly. Brill waited until I had done, and then said—

“Funny, isn’t it? Laugh away and take your time, Jimmy; but you are bound to come to my terms in the end. Look here.”

I looked, and saw him take the cartridges one by one from the pistol and throw them behind him.

“That is to make things fair,” he said; and then he went on smoking and bursting bubbles. I laughed again, and my laugh was happier now because the pistol was disabled, and we faced each other on equal terms; but I took my time for all that, and weighed all the facts once more. Then I said—

“You have been mighty smart, Brill, and have repaid my kindness to you well. But I am not scared of you, and you can just clear out of this right away. Suppose what you say is true. What then? Your word—a convict’s word—against mine is all that your hand amounts to, and Jimmy Cope was not born to be bluffed. Get out now.”

“Look here,” said Brill again, by way of reply. I looked and saw him take a pocket-book from his pocket—my cipher pocket-book. My hand went instinctively to my breast. I found a clean cut slit in my coat, but no pocket-book; and Brill laughed.

"Here it is, Jimmy. Here it is," said he. "I slit your pocket at the station to-day, and took it. Does it shock you? Why, I have stolen it and returned it a dozen times before to-day. I have spent whole nights over it, Jimmy. Look at my hands. They are the subtlest in all London." Brill held out his hands and twisted them about astonishingly, after which he resumed his smoking and bubble bursting. His face had quite lost its vacant look now, and was distressingly keen and mocking. But I laughed again softly all the same, for the thought of his beating his brains at nights against the bars of my own secret cipher tickled my fancy, and I said happily—

"And those nights were the times when smarty Brill was fooled!"

He was not riled. He did not even trouble to take the pipe from his mouth; but, taking a twisted paper from his vest pocket, he casually flipped it over to me. It was an elaborately analysed and explained key to my cipher, and I bent my head mighty low over it; not that I doubted its correctness—for I saw that at a glance—but partly to hide the expression of my face, and partly because I was going to jump for that pocket-book, which he appeared to have negligently left unguarded on the table. I felt that I must have that book; for in it was a faithful chronicle of all my doings since leaving Lodo; so, thinking the moment a favourable one, I jumped for it accurately and

boldly, and grasped it safely in my hand. Brill sat quite calm and watched my manoeuvre, but the moment it had happened he was somehow standing up with his back to me, and my arm that had grasped the book was tightly drawn over his shoulder so that the back of my upper arm was pressed down on his shoulder-blade. Both his hands were closed firmly round mine in which the book was, and, as I looked over his shoulder from behind, I could both see and feel what powerful hands his were.

"Well, Jimmy," said Brill, "what do you think of that? Can't move, eh? and, look you: were I to press here on your wrist ever so little, your humerus would snap like a pipe-stem. I'd do it too, just to show you what a foolish little chicken you are, if I didn't want you to write by and by. Does that hurt? Thought so. Now listen to me. You are going to sit down, fill yourself a glass of whisky, talk sensibly, and realise that you are dealing with a man who has the whip hand of you. Are you whipped? Yes? Then give me your hand, Jimmy."

Brill took the pocket-book from my powerless hand, swung round, and shook the hand which he still held, good-humouredly; and I—well I just did as he told me. I knew that I was whipped, and felt it keenly. Brill knew also, and sympathised.

"I know how you feel, Jimmy—like that," said he and he pressed the ball of his thumb against the tip of

his nose until it was nearly flat on his face, and laughed heartily. "That's how you used me not so long ago, Jimmy, and I have felt as you are feeling now many and many a time in my life. Come. Let us be friends and partners," said Brill, and he shook my hand again.

Daylight was beginning to creep in through the shutters before my new partner and I had done talking and had drawn up our terms of partnership; and then he said—

"I shall turn in with you, Jimmy. You are right. I don't trust you. There is nothing to trust about you, and I watched you play false to the judge, who was a bigger man than you will ever be. Your bed will hold two comfortably. Know it? Of course I do. I have been through all your goods, Jimmy, and have put the Rembrandt in a safer place. That picture must start us on the road to fortune. Come on."

We went through the folding doors into my bedroom. Brill coolly divested himself of his clothes, climbed into my bed, and said—

"Come on, Jimmy. Plenty of room."

But his familiarity and patronage jarred on my nerves like a tooth-drill, and I said I guessed I would sit up. Brill laughed as he put my pocket-book under his pillow.

"Sulks, is it?" he asked. "You will soon get over that. Better come to bed. No? All right." He slid out of bed again.

The man had become a sort of nightmare to me by this time, and I watched him with apprehension. He went to the door, locked it, and put the key under his pillow ; and, thinking that this was all he had on his mind, I smiled. I suppose he saw me smile. Anyway he came towards me like a cat, saying—

“I want that bottle, Jimmy—that bottle of morphia in your left-hand pocket, the getting of which caused you such a deal of trouble. Come now, Jimmy, old man. You grow too doocid clever when you squirt that nasty stuff into your blood. You want some badly now, don’t you ? and you would like to sit there squirting it in until it hatched all kinds of devilry in your brain. I don’t want you to think, Jimmy. I will do the thinking for the future. Out with it.”

I suppose he saw I meant to fight, so he gripped me as the last words left his mouth. His fingers went inside my collar this time and his knuckles pressed against my throat so that I was gasping in a second, and continued doing so while he emptied my morphia out of the window. Brill chuckled as he got into bed again ; and then the room became quite still.

Were I writing a novel, I should cause myself to jump on Brill, secure my pocket-book and escape at this point. The thought did occur to me, but the thought of becoming President of the United States had also once occurred to me. I did not try to escape : I tried to think, and it was a melancholy effort. My

thoughts ran on Brill ; indeed, I was permeated with Brill. What did he know ? What didn't he know ? He knew everything about me since my departure from Lodo, and he knew all that had passed in the outer world while I had been confined in St. Mary's. He had told me something of this, and I knew now that the disappearance of the judge and myself had caused a sensation, and that we had been largely discussed and advertised for in the papers, so that every policeman in the country and out of it was on the look out for us—not as frauds or defaulters, but as gentlemen who had presumably met with foul play. I also knew now that the probate of the will in Tommy's favour was only delayed by the lack of one essential affidavit, which could only be supplied by myself, and that there was nothing—and no one, save Brill—to hinder me from emerging, explaining, and signing. Brill had assured me—and I had no reason to doubt his word—that the papers had made quite a romance out of our loyal and disinterested conduct of the business throughout. Yes ; Brill knew nearly everything, but there was one thing which he did not know, and which his every word showed me he was dying to know, and it was how the will itself had been obtained ; for my diary began on the day we left Lodo. He had conveyed to me that he knew the will to be fraudulent—and there had been a ring of admiration in his voice as he conveyed it—but he had

owned that not even he could see wherein the flaw lay, and the admission had made my heart swell ; for by this time I knew Brill to be a master criminal. This had been the one little thing about which my heart had had a chance of swelling during the whole night, and I had determined to, and did then, stand by my masterpiece, and insist to the last on its genuineness. I renewed my determination now as I sat alone and utterly dejected in the silent, dark bedroom, and my determination seemed to communicate itself to Brill ; for he sat up in bed and said—

“How did you work that will, Jimmy ? Tell me. I cannot sleep for thinking of it. I will bully you no more if you will tell me.”

“I do not know what you mean,” I replied. “The will is a genuine will.” Brill lay down again. I heard him sigh, and I fancied I heard him swear, and this gave me a little comfort.

Brill ate most of my breakfast, and while he was doing it I turned into the bed he had left, feeling that I must lie down and rest my head. He came to me soon with a cup of tea and some tit-bits, which he exhorted me to imbibe. He had lost some of his hectoring tone, and spoke to me now in a boon-companion sort of manner at first, but after a while his voice dropped and he addressed me more as a child. He was justified in doing so. I felt weak and childish—weak and whipped as a man must feel after

a hundred lashes with the cat. I could not even think now, and there was not a hope, or an ambition, or a kick left in me. I was as powerless in that man's hands as is a rabbit with a weasel at its throat. Brill tried to comfort me, and told me brightly that he was going out to sell the Rembrandt and set things moving, but I turned my face to the wall and closed my eyes, and he quit his talking and went. Time passed by. How much I do not know, but much, ever so much ; and I spent it in whimpering for, and craving for, the drug that would make me a man once more ; while, at intervals my head went round and round in a wearying mental treadmill trying to conceive some hope and to frame some plan of action out of it ; trying in vain to find a weak spot in Brill. And then I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV

A WOMAN of Mrs. Jagg's type is a complex and mysterious animal—more mysterious, perhaps, than are women of higher type. My recollections of her are pleasant and grateful, and the word animal as applied to her savours of no disrespect on my part, nor have I used it without due consideration. It appeals to me as the right word to use whether considering Mrs. Jagg as a thinking or as an instinctive being. She lived with her young and her mate, all herded together in the bowels of the earth; her life's horizon was bounded by Victoria Street, Hammer-smith, and her life itself was one long slavery and worry, and wrangle with her offspring and with Jagg; one long, dull, weary struggle to live; one continuous yearly production of young; one hopeless, killing effort to do the work of half a dozen. And yet Mrs. Jagg, and thousands of others circumstanced like her, could smile and be kind. Herein lay her mystery. How did she do it? I do not even try to explain; but in this remarkable feat of hers it seemed to me

him, and had never to my knowledge seen him before, but for all that he addressed me by name, and used my hand like a pump-handle, after which he waved Mrs. Jagg authoritatively away to the lower regions. When she was gone he looked into my eyes and laughed, and the peculiar harshness of his laughter struck into me like a knife, and told me that the man was Brill. Otherwise I should not have known him, nor do I reckon his mother would. His make-up was a masterpiece.

He was elated, and extracting a canvas bag from the tail of his clerical coat, he cut the string at its mouth and emptied its shining contents on to the table.

"A hundred pounds for the Rembrandt, Jimmy. What do you think of that? Count them. Count them," he cried, delving his hand in and out among the sovereigns. He was exultant, strangely so for Brill, and it came to me like a flash that the man had been drinking.

"Bully for you, partner. Well done, Brill!" I said with heartiness. "Have you had supper? Yes? You must be thirsty anyway. Have a drink, old man. Where did you put the whisky?"

He knew where he had put it, rose to my suggestion with alacrity, went to a cupboard, returned with the bottle and filled a tumbler half full of the raw spirit, and drank it down at a gulp. I said—

"Well done, Brill!" and my mind said "Well done, Brill"; and my heart jumped up inside me and commenced beating like a drum. I had discovered a weak point in Brill at last.

Brill pulled out his pipe now, and having lit it, sat down on the arm of my chair, caressing my shoulder with his arm in a confidential manner.

"Now, Jimmy, lad," said he, "before I tell you what I have done, I want you to whisper to me how you managed that will. Tell me, Jimmy."

"The will is genuine. Charles Mulready signed it," I replied stolidly and instinctively. There was nothing whatever congenial between me and Brill. I loathed the man, and distrusted him; and his disgusting familiarity made me shrink from him in spite of myself and push his caressing arm from me. He did not like it, and the hand that had caressed my shoulder now gripped it.

"You are lying to me, Jimmy," he said fiercely. "I must know where the flaw lies so as to guard it. We cannot work together with confidence, I cannot work at all, until I know it. Tell me now."

He looked fiercely into my eyes, and I said again—

"The will is a genuine will. You will tear my shoulder if you grip it that way. Let me alone. I do not wish to work with you."

He sat for a full minute thus gripping my shoulder, and staring into my eyes, and I returned his stare,

though my brain felt weak and my heart also ; and then he tried me once more. Loosing his grip he dived his hand into his breast, pulled out a phial labelled morphia, and held it aloft before my eyes.

"Tell me the truth, and you shall have it, Jimmy. Smell it, man. Smell it, he said, and he poked the phial under my nose. It was the genuine stuff, but once more I said—

"The will is a genuine will, Brill." Perhaps, all circumstances considered, this was the grittiest deed of my life ; certainly it showed my hate and distrust of the man as no other deed could have shown it. I felt I would die rather than tell him what he had set his heart on knowing, and my instinct urged me to lie as powerfully as did my hate. Brill looked at me, and then dropped the phial into the glowing fire. He was quiet for awhile now, and seemed doubting and baffled ; but gradually his cordiality returned to him, and, slapping his knee, he cried—

"I have wronged you, Jimmy, and I believe you now. Give me your hand on it. We must make a fresh start, and I will doubt you no more. One minute."

He now made for the outer door, reeling some, and whistled in a peculiar way ; and when I heard the whistle I called out to him bitterly—

"So that is how you summon your spies, partner ?"

He did not reply, but spoke to the man who had now approached.

"You can go," he said. "I do not need you any more. Quick now."

The man slid away into the fog, and Brill, coming back to me, said—

"And now, Jimmy, we will start fair. Give me your hand again, and let us have a drink on it."

I gave him my hand, but declined the drink, and he shouted recklessly—

"Then, damn you, I will drink for two."

He did so, and I never ceased watching the bottle afterwards. The clock struck eight as we sat down to talk, and the bottle then was three-parts full. At ten o'clock the bottle was empty.

It would be quite impossible for me to express what I felt during those two hours, as I sat watching the bottle and listening to Brill's talk. He was fairly steady at first, and asked me somewhat proudly what I thought of his disguise. A parson's clothes were a passport into anywhere, he told me; and they had certainly taken him to strange places. I could not but marvel at the man, so full of cunning and ingenuity had his day's doings been. Not that I accepted all his statements readily; for I made him enter into every minute detail of every step he had taken. He did this readily and joyously, seeming pleased at my acuteness and proud of his own methods; and he advanced many unasked proofs, and dwelt on many subtleties of the detective's art by the way. He had

located Tommy after following his London career through all kinds of vicissitudes, through all of which Abe had faithfully followed. They were now in a wretched lodging house close by the Victoria Docks, awaiting a chance of working their way home. And then Brill surprised me by telling me that Vivian was with them. He had traced her from start to finish also, from the time when she had been left dazed in the darkened theatre amid the shrieks and blows and curses of my panic-struck assailants. Vine had found her there, and had pitied her and taken her home with her. However, she was now with Tommy and Abe, dressed in boy's clothes once more. These facts interested me in spite of myself, and I tried to keep Brill to the point ; but as he drank he became exultant and boastful of his own deeds, and branched off.

"Talk of detectives," he cried scornfully, "why, we of the talent are detectives as well as criminals. Do you think I could have done all this alone, Jimmy ? A hundred men have worked for me to-day—men of our London Fraternity, who are bound together by common crime, and who are immeasurably better organised and in touch than any detective force in the world. I have but to go to our headquarters, Jimmy, my lad, and say a few words, and behold, within a few hours, a secret eye will be watching my interests in every quarter of London and in every town of Great Britain. We have our code, Jimmy, not an

A.B.C. one like that in your pocket-book, but one that has in course of time been refined down to a perfection that is beyond detection ; and we have our signs and gestures which are triumphs of eloquent expression without words. So long as I am sober, Jimmy," he cried, thumping the table, "I fear no fuddling, muddling detective in the world. Here's to them !"

Brill laughed, filled his glass, and drained a bumper. The bottle was two-thirds empty by this time, and he was becoming thick of speech. Suddenly he raised his glass again, saying—

"Here's to Vine, Jimmy ! The girl you love. She is an angel, she is" ; and then he burst into derisive laughter, and my blood boiled while I listened. Brill lurched over to me now, and seating himself on the arm of my chair threw his arm once more familiarly around my neck. "Always thinking about that woman, eh, Jimmy ? Gay little Jimmy !" said he, leering at me in a would-be bantering manner and holding up his finger unsteadily. "Cuddlesome little witch, ain't she ?" And then he added with drunken solemnity, "But she's bad, Jimmy, just like all of them. Shall I tell you why those innocents left her ? Shall I ? Will it hurt you ? They left her, Jimmy, because she left them—left them to go and live with a young spark with plenty in his pockets but nothing in his head—to live with him, Jimmy, for the money's sake. She is a——"

An abominable look came to Brill's face, but he said no word ; for I drowned his voice by shouting, "You lie," while I struggled to rise and avenge the insult which hurt me with a pain the like of which I had never felt before.

But Brill, not seeming to heed my struggles, sprawled over me in drunken fashion, and went on bantering—

"She did, Jimmy, straight. He is a toff, you know, and she lost her object in life when she thought you were dead, and followed her natural bent. It is true, and I have her address."

Brill looked into my face and laughed, but managing to free my right arm, I struck at his mouth with it. He lurched from the chair arm still laughing, and my fist struck the air only. I rose now with the impulse on me to follow him up and cram the lie down his throat, but I refrained and sat down again. Yes. I deliberately sat down and laughed with him as though I enjoyed the joke. Think I was a coward, reader ? You are ways off if you do. I was never more truly brave and forgetful of self than then. My time soon came. Brill sat down next, very soon, and very heavily on the floor, neither could he get up again. His laughter ceased now, and he seemed afraid—same as a drowning man who has swum out too far and realises too late that he cannot get back. He held out his hands supplicatingly and unsteadily to me, and I sat still and watched him do it. It was

eerie work—like sitting by with a rope and watching a man drown a few feet away. There is nothing amusing in watching a man in clerical attire slowly drown on a parlour floor. Anyway it did not amuse me, and my heart seemed to beat in my throat all the while his eyes were staring into mine just as a drowning man's would stare from a foot or so under the water. His hands clutched around considerable, first at his collar, and then at his lank black hair, and then at the air, as a drowning man is said to clutch at a straw ; but he gradually gave up, and sank—sank to sleep on the parlour floor, and I sat on and listened to his stertorous breathing. I could do nothing else at first ; for the man fascinated me, even in his sleep. Think ? My God how I tried to think, with my head feeling light and giddy, and my fingers pressing themselves into those horse-hair arms ; but nothing would come to me but those words the doctor had said to me when I was leaving St. Mary's. Over and over again they came to me, seeming to watch and put my every other thought through a process of analysis lest it should be a mad thought. I would have given a hand for a drop of morphia now—just one drop to make me the same old Jimmy who had planned and schemed and dared in the days that had preceded the breaking of my head at the theatre.

I do not know how long I sat thus trying to concentrate my brain and nerves into action. It cannot have

been very long, and yet it seemed a long and terrible time, and, when I moved, only one thought, besides the animal instinct of self-preservation, was in my mind, and it was that I must have my cypher pocket-book. So I went to Brill, and, bending over him, felt in his breast for it. A pocket-book was there, and I seized it eagerly. But it was not mine. I tried again, one pocket after the other this time, and they were all empty.

I looked at Brill's pocket-book now in a dazed kind of way. It was a new one, and contained only one entry, which was on its first page. This was :

VINE DUNCAN,
32, PILGRIM STREET,
ST. JOHN'S WOOD.

Another thought came into my mind when I had read this, driving all else from it. It was the thought of what Brill had said about Vine, the woman I loved ; and two minutes after I had thought it, I was running down Victoria Road as fast as I could run, with the £100 which Brill had left on the table in my pocket, and Brill's clerical hat on my head. It had been the only hat I could find in my haste. No one stopped me, and when I got to the end of Victoria Road, I ran on. It seemed to me that I must get to Vine if I kept on running ; but, after a ten minutes' trial I could run

no more, and the realisation of this fact sobered me some. I looked for a cab now, and found one after a search. Eleven o'clock was striking as we started for No. 32, Pilgrim Street. A strange time for a call ; but this was not a matter of etiquette.

CHAPTER XXV.

I WAS a fool, and knew it, as I drove along through the choking fog. I should have run away from Vine, not gone to her. Away from her, and I was strong enough to try and hate her ; with her and her eyes and the music of her voice, and that awoke in me which overrode all reason. This had ever been so. I should have run from her, and from Brill with the £100 still in my pocket, and I knew it. And yet I could not do it.

I dismissed the cab at the opening of Pilgrim Street and pursued my way on foot. I did not wish to be driven to the door. I was glad of the fog. It acted like an invisible cloak. Pilgrim Street was a quiet street, and its houses—from what I could see of them—were large, high, sombre structures. I limped up many door-steps and expended many matches in searching for numbers before I found No. 32, which, outwardly at least, was as sombre as the rest. Here, on the door-step of No. 32, I hesitated, and should probably have stood indefinitely in weak indecision had not a song sung by a woman's voice come to me as I stood.

I have often heard women scream, in court and out of it, especially in it. They are apt to act that way when they themselves, or their lovers, or husbands are convicted and sentenced, and the sound means nothing much besides feeling, with possible fainting or hysterics to follow. Such screams have never appealed to me ; in fact I used to like to hear them, just as a parson likes to hear a baby squeak at the font, or the hunter to hear the roar of the wounded lioness. They made me feel that I had accomplished something. But the sound of that hideous, ribald song sung by Vine's voice—the voice I loved—was a thousand times worse than a scream.

I loved Vine. I did not want to, and had tried to kill my love by robbing her and wronging her and persecuting her. But it could not be killed that way. It must either have, or kill and end. I could not reason about it, I could not understand it, but I could feel it, and knew that it could not end save by death. It was a mighty paradox that I could not construe. It had been the one ideal, as it had been the greatest thing, of my life ; and it had spoiled my life : it had been my one glance into the realm of higher things, and it had cast me down to lower things ; and while I had fallen lower and lower Vine had remained the same, the one ideal of my life : always the same Vine, and it had never occurred to me as conceivable that she should fall or be weighed down one hair's-

breadth through my instrumentality. And thus the sound of that hideous abandoned pot-house song on her lips, and sung by her voice—that voice, the music of which alone had power to wake my dormant better self to life—came to me with a pang such as a man can suffer but once in life. Vine paid back every wrong I had done her, every suffering I had caused her, every sin I had committed in that one little hell-song. You do not believe it, reader? Quite right. Never believe anything, or in anything or any one. You are my enemy by this time, ain't you, and you hate me? I hate you also; I hate everybody; but I would not wish that my bitterest enemy should hear a voice, with music in it such as had Vine's voice, raised in a hell-song such as she sang then. I should be surprised if you did believe me.

I moved when her voice had died away—moved to the door and, pushing it desperately, fell into the front hall. The door was unfastened. The hall was unlit, but a bright ray of light, coming from a half-open door at its further end, fell across it, and, having gathered myself up, I made for that half-open door and looked through it into a large and lofty double room. The first thing that dazzled my eyes and held them was a chandelier of crystal which blazed with light and hung from the ceiling of the inner and further room. Heavy crimson velvet curtains, looped back with great broad dead-gold bands, hung in the

archway which divided the rooms, and afforded only a vignettèd view of the inner one ; but it was at this that I looked first, compelled by the blazing chandelier. A flare of mirrors, gilding, gorgeous drapery, pictures, *bric-à-brac* and furniture was what I saw here, all of them of gaudy richness and luxuriousness, but all glittering, glaring, and unrestful to the eyes as was the chandelier. I could not see a piano, nor could I see any living thing in the place, but a smell of pungent perfume and tobacco smoke mingled together was everywhere plainly indicating the proximity of a woman and a man, or women and men. By the time I had taken in these things, my eyes had become more accustomed to the light, and I was able to see the contents of the outer room which lay immediately in front of me. This was lit only by a refulgence of the light which came through the gap in the curtains which divided the rooms. A supper table stood here spread with a cloth that would have been snow-white had not a great red stain of newly spilt wine traversed it nearly from end to end. Many things in great confusion were on the table. Fruit in costly dishes, confections, much silver, and many decanters and champagne bottles. Two of the champagne bottles lay empty on their sides on the table, one of them lay in a like condition on the floor, while the decanter whence the red stain had flowed lay on the cloth in fragments. Two people had supped at the table. I could tell this at a glance, not only by

the two chairs, but by the way in which all the things were left, and the cigar stump on the man's dessert plate, and the glove left lying on the chair where the woman had sat. Everything was evidence that they had supped, and of how they had supped—such evidence as made me more miserable than I had ever been before.

My description of what I saw on looking into these rooms has occupied a page of manuscript; the actual seeing occupied a few moments only, which might have become more had not some one in the inner room struck a few chords on the piano which was hidden by the curtain. They were sad and miserable minor chords, and coming almost before the echo of that forbidding hell-song had died away, they struck on my heart and changed my every thought in a moment. No one but Vine—the old Vine—could have played those chords as she played them then; and she and old times came back to me with a rush, and the cathedral-organ feeling came as well at the sound of them.

I stole softly to the curtains and looked beyond them. I saw her now, sitting there rigidly by the piano with her face upraised and grief-drawn, seeming almost to speak. Never had I seen her so beautiful and pathetic, never so hideous and degraded. A paradoxical sentence that, eh? But it is a true one. I cannot describe her dress correctly, for a tuck and a hem are all the same

to me ; but I can say what came to my eye. A sense of richness first—a richness sufficient to delight the most fastidious courtesan. Red was the prevailing colour—ruby red that seemed to glow against the whiteness of her skin. Its shape ? Well, I reckon it was pretty near her shape down to the waist, whence the skirt went right along to her feet without any joining, clinging some in places. There was no lace or frippery where the bodice left off at top—so that soon I felt sick with shame—nothing but a tightly-drawn band of glittering black beads that continued on either side and formed loops over the curves of her round white shoulders. Diamonds were everywhere, one cluster up among her shining black hair, another on her breast where the golden cross used to lie, and buckles plumb full of them peeped out from beneath her skirt, lying on the smallest red shoes I ever saw. They were hideous to me, those diamonds—not of themselves, but by reason of their suggestive power. They seemed to stab me—every one of them seemed to stab me. I have left Vine's face to the last because it was the most beautiful and the most hideous of all. It was Vine's face, mind you, and Vine's soul looked out unchanged from its eyes ; but there was paint on that face, and around those eyes from behind which she seemed to look out plaintively and appealingly as though that paint was a mask of sin that could never again be torn away.

I went to Vine after that, reader ; for a tenderness

came to me then that never had fully come before, and will never come again ; and I knelt down at her feet. She did not repulse me, nor did she seem surprised, and this seemed to me quite natural ; for I had forgotten myself in the grief on her wonderful face, and only remembered that I loved her and that she was suffering. My individuality had become submerged under those eyes of hers. It seemed quite natural that she should stretch out her arms to me and say dreamily—

“ I felt, I knew that you were coming.”

I looked back into her eyes as I knelt there, and I—think of it—I started in to plead with her that she would leave her life of sin and come with me. My whole heart was in my words, the heart that never woke save when I looked into her eyes and heard the music of her voice, and it made me realise the meaning of a prayer ; but she stopped my words by placing her hand ever so gently over my mouth, and then she looked over her shoulder. I looked where she looked, and saw a man lying huddled there on the sofa behind us. I had not seen him before, because, since seeing Vine's face I had seen nothing ; but I saw him lying there now in his drunken sleep, and knew him to be the creature who had led Vine astray and marred her purity. I was sure he was drunk ; for though I could only see the back of his silk-lined dress-coat, and of his silk-worked socks, and of his pumps, of his flaxen

head half hidden in a crushed opera hat, his whole pose seemed to speak of disgusting drunkenness ; and when I found her eyes again, they told me the same. I rose to my feet now. I was going to settle with the wretch right there, I was going to choke him ; but her hand caught my hand, and her eyes caught my eyes, and she curled her lips and shook her head contemptuously. She drew me to her feet again, and her eyes looked down into mine and held them after that ; for her look was ever so tender and I seemed to read in it that she loved me.

"Whisper," she whispered, and I whispered a prayer to her—it was a prayer—to have pity on me and let me love her and slave for her and through it find my better self. And her eyes looked all the while into mine dreamily and softly, and my eyes seemed to swim into hers so that little by little I became drunk with my love, nor could I take my eyes away. And now softly, very softly, she put out her hands, and her fingers caressed my hair, and then my temples ; and then my eyes, while I was speaking, passed here and there swiftly and confusingly, yet delightfully, soothingly withal.

"Kiss me, Jimmy," she whispered, and she bent down her royal head until her hair brushed mine, and I kissed her.

"You love me, Vine ?"

She did not reply in words, but her eyes seemed to

answer far, far more beautifully than words could have done, and she bent down and kissed me.

"Will you come with me?" I whispered again in a whisper that would scarcely come; and she answered my question with another.

"Will you swear to live a pure life, and to love me, and to right the wrongs you have done?"

And I laughed as I knelt there—laughed a laugh that nearly choked me with its exultation—at the thought that these were the only conditions that stood between Vine and me. And I raised my hand and swore to be true and loyal and pure in words that were right true burning words—words I would fain have shouted.

She held out her hand to me, and I clasped it and held it till she spoke again.

"It will be hard, dear, ever so hard," she said tenderly. "There must be nothing between us hidden, no past that may blight in the time to come. I must tell everything, and you must tell everything before we can begin anew and trusting each other wholly. Dare you, dear? It is hard, so hard to tell the truth when that truth is bad and sordid. Dare you? What little thing to try?"

The question stung me, though her voice was so tender and sad. "You do not know my love," I said. "Try it."

"That will, Jimmy? Charles Mulready's will. How did you come by it?" she asked suddenly.

Her great eyes still looked down into mine, steadfast, shining, and pure as crystal, and yet that question, and the voice that asked it so suddenly, disturbed me strangely. I broke away from her gaze and looked nervously behind me. The question she had asked was that devil Brill's question, and though I knew him to be lying insensible on the floor in Mrs. Jagg's parlour with the contents of a bottle of whisky inside him, my backward glance was in search of him, and a great dread was on me as I cast it. But he was not there. No one was there but the effeminately dressed being with the flaxen hair who still lay huddled on the sofa in his drunken sleep; when I had ascertained this, I looked at Vine again, to find her tender lips now curled with scorn, and her eyes full of contempt and pity. She did not speak, but her looks were more than words, and they shamed me, and taunted me into speech.

"Charles Mulready never knew that he signed a will, Vine," I said steadily. "I stuck a slip of parchment bearing the words 'Power of Attorney' over the words 'Last Will and Testament,' and he thought he was signing a simple power of attorney. He never knew that the Mulready property had come to him. Now that you have my secret, are you satisfied of my love?"

She did not answer, and her eyes seemed to die out as I looked into them, so that I sprang to my feet and

caught her in my arms. She had fainted. Yes. Once, for one exquisite moment of time, I held my ideal Vine in my arms and clasped her to my heart ; and then my ideal died forever, and the heart she had awakened died with her. A hand fastened in my collar from behind now, and I heard a shrill whistle and then a harsh laugh—Brill's laugh, and then the sound of many feet. They took Vine from me now—Vivian and Tommy and Abe did—and struggle as I would, that hand held on to my collar and jerked me round. I was face to face with Brill now. His was the flaxen hair, and his were the foppish clothes, and he was the man who had lain all the while on the sofa with his head in the crushed opera hat. How he got there, or why he entered into my life and helped to betray me, I have never found out ; but when I saw him, and the two constables standing behind him, I knew that Vine had played with me and betrayed me, and my ideal Vine fell—fell ways, ways down, killingly down, to the level of all other women. She had fooled me willingly and treacherously, and to the limit of her strength ; but I tell you as I looked at her lying there on the sofa I pitied her with a real pity, and scorned her with a real scorn ; for she had won by cruelly torturing to death that heart of mine which beat truly and unselfishly for her, but which she alone could awaken to better things.

I went away with those constables quite quietly ; for

I did not care. I looked round on those who were watching me before going—on Vivian and Tommy and Abe, who had been lying in ambush with the constables. Tommy returned my look coldly and steadily, but Vivian and Abe turned aside, my face seeming to hurt them. I do not wonder ; for I caught sight of myself in the large mirror which hung behind them, and looked into my own face without knowing it. I still had on Brill's clerical hat ; I still had the late Kelly's carpet slippers on my feet ; but there was something in that face of mine so articulate of grief and pain and desolation that I did not recognise it.

See that white space ? It represents the blank of my life since then—seven years of it, I am told. What has happened in the outer world during those years I do not know ; but my reason is now completely restored ; and lately, at the request of a publisher, I have been permitted to write this narrative up to the point when my heart died and my life broke off. The task has passed the time away, which is my object in life now. As for the outer world, I have no desire to return to it ; but I should like to see one man there once, and the man is Brill. I should like to ask him why he

interfered with my life, and how he managed to drink whisky by the bottle.

I have received one letter since I was brought here. It was from Vine, and its envelope bore a small cross with St. Mary's printed around it. That is all I know of it, for I burnt it unread.

My last words shall be for you, Vine—you, woman, now slaving among those good sisters of St. Mary's. Slave, pray, die as you will, but may you never wipe out the record that you bared a human heart until you could see it beating truly and nobly and bravely for you, and then ruthlessly seared and killed it. May your God curse you for it, Vine.

JAMES COPE,

HEDGEFIELD ASYLUM.

Explanatory note by Detective Sergeant Sneath.

"I am no writer, but at the request of my friend and benefactor, Dr. Sutherland, now Doctor in Charge at the Hedgefield Lunatic Asylum, I willingly add this explanatory note to the foregoing pages.

"Dr. Sutherland asks me to make two things clear : How I came into James Cope's life professionally and as an enemy ; and, How I came into that life privately and as a friend.

"I entered George Box's, and afterwards James Cope's, service under the name of Brill, being employed professionally to do so by Messrs. Codling and

Lister on behalf of the Mulready heirs. James Cope has already stated in the preceding pages, very truly and very graphically, how I did it, and what treatment I received while in his service ; so I need not dwell further on that part of his narrative, but will pass on at once to the time when I ceased to be his slave and became his bully.

“The ten weeks which he spent in St. Mary’s were, to me, weeks of unremitting thought and work. As a murderer I could have dealt with him easily, or as a thief ; but I had been employed with the express purpose of finding out the secret of the fraudulent will—which was indeed a masterpiece—and I knew that to have him prematurely arrested for the murder, though I could prove he had committed it, or, for any of his other crimes, would mean the burial of the great secret for ever. The line which I finally adopted was the fruit of ten weeks of thought and preparation and rehearsal ; and I doubt if I should ever have taken it, had I not been in confidential relations with Miss Vine Duncan, and had I not realised fully the extraordinary influence she had over James Cope’s life. In fact, it was I who first brought fully to her knowledge the nature of the love which this extraordinary man bore her, and I was able to do so by reason of the ceaseless secret watch I had kept on him while I was his servant and drudge. Though he does not mention the fact in his memoir—and it seems to me natural

that he should not—I am sure that from the time of his leaving Lodo, she was seldom, if ever, out of his thoughts, and over and over again I have heard him mutter her name, and sometimes even cry it out when he fancied himself alone with his thoughts.

“The reader who has followed his narrative will have seen how hard I tried to gain his confidence, and to worm and tempt his secret from him by my own exertions ; and it was only as a very last resource that I was able to use the scheme I had prepared for employing his great love as a lever.

“I think Miss Vine Duncan was the most beautiful and fascinating woman I have ever met, and when I had heard her voice there seemed nothing surprising in the fact that it enthralled Jimmy—who was extraordinarily susceptible to the influence of music—and probed that better side of his. I am not musical, but her voice, and her peculiar music, moved even me.

“She was a good woman also, one of the best ; and I can quite understand the extreme reluctance with which she finally consented to act in concert with me in the way I suggested. She shrank from the ordeal pitifully, and I spent the whole of that last day, when Jimmy thought I had been selling the Rembrandt and about our joint business, in pleading with her, and convincing her that she was morally bound to aid me for the sake of others. I must say that, when the time

came and I lay on that sofa listening, I understood and appreciated her reluctance to the full, and I pitied her—yes, and the man also—from the very bottom of my heart. He was on the brink of madness then, and I shall never forget the look which came to his eyes when he realised the truth about her.

“I do not suppose I should ever have succeeded in outwitting Jimmy had his head still been as it was before his accident; but, as I have said, his mind had suffered and he was weak and on the brink of that madness which intervened before the trial and landed him in Hedgefield Lunatic Asylum during Her Majesty’s pleasure, where I finally attended him.

“I honestly pitied Jimmy while he knelt to Miss Vine. No one could have watched him and heard him without doing so. And I pity him still, and shall never tell him about that whisky, because I know it would hurt him. It was very simple, though. In the morning, when I was pretending to breakfast and he was in bed, I emptied all the whisky from that bottle and replaced it with very weak tea. That was all. My drunkenness was feigned, all of it; but after reading his description of it I feel proud of it; indeed the whole case was my greatest case, and brought me what fame I now enjoy. Also, through the generosity of Mr. Thomas Mulready, who figures in these memoirs as Tommy, and who has long ago come into the

possession of the Mulready estates, the job made me independent for life. I may add that he subsequently married the lady known to the reader as Vivian, and that Abe is still with him as right-hand man.

"The house in Pilgrim Street, to which I was driven at a gallop one minute after Jimmy had left me lying on the floor, had been hired and furnished and prepared for effect by me a whole week previously, and the scene had been rehearsed and the method planned. But as a last resource, a very last resource, owing to Miss Vine's repugnance to trading on Jimmy's love for her.

"Now, as to how I came into James Cope's life as a friend. That was the doctor's doing, and a very few words will explain it.

"Some years ago he, Doctor Sutherland, knowing what an interest I took in James Cope's welfare, wrote to me telling me of his restored reason, and expressing a fear that unless something could be found to interest and occupy his mind, it might relapse to lunacy again. He asked me for a suggestion, and I made one. It was that I should pose as a sort of Editor-Publisher, and request poor Jimmy to write the above. No idea of future publication ever occurred to us, but Jimmy took to the thing eagerly, and, after reading his production, it has seemed to the doctor and myself that his writing may interest others as well as ourselves.

We have obtained a ready consent to the publication from all those mentioned in the memoirs who are not dead, and whatever profits may accrue from the venture will be used to render James Cope's future life more happy and comfortable.

"ALFRED SNEATH."

